

Exploring commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles

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by
Odile Andrine Louise de Comarmond

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late mum Eva, who would have been proud to witness the end of this journey, and to my two daughters Ethel and Colette who have supported me throughout.

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Abstract

This thesis reports on an investigation into teacher commitment in secondary schools in Seychelles. The overarching aim was to gain an insight into the experiences and perceptions of teacher commitment in order to get a better understanding of teachers' career trajectories and issues relating to teacher retention. Another aim was to explore the experiences and perceptions of the participating teachers, headteachers and policymakers on the factors that influence commitment and trajectories of secondary teachers at the different stages of their teaching careers.

In order to achieve these aims a qualitative methodology was chosen with a combination of three different approaches: phenomenography, phenomenology and multiple case studies. The use of multiple-approaches was considered appropriate in order to enhance the results of the investigation of such a complex phenomenon like teacher commitment. The case studies focused on four teacher groups representing newly qualified teachers, mid-career teachers, experienced teachers and teachers who had left the profession. Data were sought from different participant groups in relation to teacher commitment, experiences and career trajectories. The exploration involved semi-structured interviews with secondary teachers, headteachers and policymakers.

The findings show that participants describe teacher commitment in relation to altruism, personal qualities, pedagogical content knowledge and connectedness. The ideas of what constitutes a committed teacher for these participants reveal complexity in the phenomenon of teacher commitment. Personal, organisational and contextual factors are found to influence these participants' understandings. The findings identify a complex interplay of personal and contextual spheres of influence on teacher commitment.

Another level of complexity that the findings revealed relate to the interconnection between teacher commitment, teachers' career stages and retention. The commitment of beginning teachers is found to be more at risk than that of mid-career and experienced teachers. Education stakeholders hold different views to those of teachers on the factors that impact on teacher commitment and retention.

The study concludes by proposing a conceptual model for teacher commitment that illustrates its complex nature. Teacher commitment is multifaceted and the nature and level of commitment held by teachers involves the constant negotiation between these different factors.

The findings of the study contribute to a nuanced understanding of teacher commitment and have the potential to generate more in-depth and extensive studies of this phenomenon. These findings may inform policymakers both in Seychelles and in other national and international contexts about issues relating to teacher recruitment, development and retention, which are worldwide concerns.

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Chapter One: Background and context

Introduction

Teachers are at the core of any education system. Societies need committed teachers to maintain a stable, qualified workforce, particularly with the changes that are taking place around the world as a result of globalisation and technological developments. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Report of 2005 noted the fundamental role of teachers in the social well-being and economic well-being of society (OECD, 2005a). The challenges that are being faced internationally are how to attract sufficient numbers of quality candidates into the teaching profession, sustain their commitment once they are qualified and retain them in the system. These worldwide education issues of concern around teacher commitment and the impact on teacher quality, recruitment and retention are topics of rigorous research in many developed countries. However, there is a relative lack of empirical research situated in developing countries. This thesis makes a contribution towards expanding the research base relating to teacher commitment in developing nations, focused on questions pertaining to teacher commitment in Seychelles.

In this chapter the context, purpose and significance of the study are elaborated. The research questions are outlined and the structure of the thesis is presented. Understandings of concepts pertaining to teacher commitment, career stages and retention are presented. These themes are explored further in the literature review that forms the basis of chapter two. Some background information on Seychelles has been provided to contextualise the research and indicate why issues of teacher commitment are relevant in the context of Seychelles. For more information on the geographical and historical background of Seychelles refer to Appendix A. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis structure.

Purpose of study

In Seychelles, as in other countries, there are political, social and economic imperatives that are focusing attention on schools and teacher education, in particular, on secondary teacher education and secondary teaching. Seychelles is currently facing a problem with a shortage of teachers, exacerbated by the large numbers of teachers who are leaving the profession within

a short time of being qualified as well as those who are more experienced. In his State of the Nation address in February 2008, the President of the Republic of Seychelles, President James Michel, referred to the vision of education in Seychelles for the next ten years– this, being to turn Seychelles into a knowledge-based society. In response to these expectations the Seychelles government and the Ministry of Education placed a lot of emphasis on the provision of qualified teachers to sustain developments in education and to enhance students' outcomes. In this study I explore conceptualisations of teacher commitment with the aim of understanding what different groups, particularly teachers themselves, think constitute 'committed' teachers.

The complexity or the 'intensification' of teaching as referred to by Hargreaves (1994), can be characterised by "bureaucratically driven escalation of pressures, expectations and concerns about what teachers do and how much they should be doing within the teaching day" (p.108). The role of the teacher therefore has arguably become more complex and more stressful. The increased pressure and expectations on teachers is reflected in a decline in teacher morale and satisfaction which are key reasons for teachers who contemplate leaving the profession (Webb, Vulliamy, Hamalainen, Sarja, Kimonen & Nevalainen, 2004). In this changing educational environment there is a growing interest in exploring the phenomenon of teacher commitment, in view of its link to teacher quality and its influence on enhancing teachers' intentions to stay on in the profession. Issues around the promotion of teacher quality have been thoroughly discussed in the latest Learning Curve report (2012). Amongst the factors highlighted is the importance of "attracting the best people to the profession and providing the right training" (p. 25). This report recognises the importance of having a quality teacher workforce and the effect that this may have on students' learning outcomes and on social and economic outcomes of any nation.

The purpose of my study, thus, is to investigate perceptions of teacher commitment among secondary teachers and education stakeholders in Seychelles, and the factors that are influencing the commitment of secondary teachers at the different stages of the profession. The initial motivation to teach and the experiences of teachers in the profession are examined in relation to their levels of commitment and their career trajectories. The primary focus of the study is on classroom teachers in order to gain a deeper understanding of how they perceive teacher commitment and how their commitment is enacted in their professional lives. Another dimension of the study is the inclusion of headteachers and policymakers.

These groups are included in order to gain multiple perspectives and potentially diverse understandings of what constitutes a committed teacher, how these groups perceive changes in teachers' levels of commitment, and their understandings about what influences teachers' decisions to stay or leave teaching at the different career stages. Synergies and discrepancies between the experiences of the teachers and the views of the education stakeholders are examined.

My research is timely, given the ongoing development of the University of Seychelles and of teacher education, along with a number of reform initiatives for secondary schools (Government of Seychelles, 1994, 2007; Hughes-d'Aeth, 2011; Nolan, 2008). The potential implications of the research for Seychelles and beyond are highlighted in the discussions of findings.

Contextual background

This section provides some brief background information on the current education system in Seychelles, which will help the reader to understand the historical, political and socio-economic context of this study and of teachers' work in Seychelles (refer to Appendix A for a geographical and historical background of the country). It provides a context for understanding challenges in Seychelles relating to teacher commitment, quality, recruitment and retention.

Structure and organisation of secondary schools

Seychelles has established a comprehensive and co-educational system of schooling (refer to Appendix B for a timeline of developments in education from colonial times to the reforms of 1999). There are ten years of compulsory schooling from primary one (P1) to secondary four (S4). Appendix C provides a schematic representation of the structure of schooling in Seychelles. Education in state schools is free from pre-primary to post-secondary level. The current education policy is based on the principles of equity, quality and accountability relating to the operational goals of the education service, while the terminal goals are “education for empowerment, education for productivity, education for social cohesion and education for global participation” (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 2). The education system is a centralised one, in which the Ministry of Education has full control over the budget

allocation, curriculum provision and textbooks, and recruitment of teachers and other school staff.

There are five years of secondary education (refer to Appendix C for a diagrammatic representation of the structure of the education system). Secondary education is compulsory from secondary one (11 ½ to 12 yrs) to secondary four (15½ to 16 yrs). There are ten regional secondary schools spread over three different islands (eight on the main island and one each on two other inner islands). Secondary five is a non-compulsory year, although the majority of students opt to remain in schools during that year, particularly if they wish to pursue post-secondary training. Secondary schools are run by a headteacher, assisted by two deputies: deputy for curriculum of lower secondary (S1-S3) and a deputy for curriculum of upper secondary (S4-S5). Teachers are organised into departments and each department is headed by a head of department (HOD).

Curriculum and assessment

There are nine areas of the national curriculum based on both academic and technical education, which extend to the first three years of the secondary cycle (Ministry of Education, 2001). In the last two years of secondary education (S4 and S5), the curriculum is modified to accommodate an option system that includes core, academic and technical education. The academic curriculum leads to the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) offered by Cambridge International Examinations. Some education reports have highlighted the difficulties with the secondary curriculum structure and challenge the appropriateness of this curriculum content in different cultural and national contexts (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003; Nolan, 2008; Sultana, 2001). Some of the concerns in the Seychelles context are the disparities between the intentions of the Ministry of Education in terms of curriculum and its implementation, especially in terms of leaning strongly on the traditional academic subjects, thus focusing on international examinations. Although there are technical/vocational subjects, in the context of Seychelles these are still looked upon as subjects for those who do not achieve in the academic subjects (Nolan, 2008).

After secondary five, students make seven choices for further education in post-secondary institutions, prioritising the order of preferred courses in particular institutions. Upon receipt of the international examination results, there is a selection process for all the post-secondary

institutions. This selection of candidates is quota driven, which means that each course is allocated a maximum number of places on the course that needs to be filled. This allows a maximum intake of students. There are concerns, however, over the standards of students graduating from secondary schools. The international examination results are not always to the expected levels (Appendix D shows statistics of students' performance in international examinations from 2007 to 2011), which means that many students do not meet the entry criteria for post-secondary courses. However, because selection is quota driven, even if the students do not meet the entry requirements of particular courses of their choice, the committee tends to lower the entry criteria in order to obtain more entries to meet their quota. Therefore, more students get the opportunity to be accepted into an institution.

This quota policy is seen by the authorities as a good thing in terms of entry numbers and recruitment to tertiary education, but reports have pointed to the adverse effects on the standards in tertiary courses, including standards of entrants into teacher education (Nolan, 2008). Moreover, this policy very often results in students being accepted not in their first career choice, but in whatever course is available. So even if the system is trying to improve the standards for teachers, these selection and allocation processes are not likely to satisfy this need. This situation also raises some potential issues and questions relating to teacher commitment and quality, where prospective teachers' entry qualifications may not be particularly strong and where teaching may not be their preferred career.

Training of Teachers

The National Institute of Education (NIE) was the sole teacher training institution in the Seychelles, up to December 2009. In the ten years of its existence NIE had three mandates, namely training of teachers (both pre-service and in-service training), curriculum development and research. Recruitment of students for the primary teacher education course was done directly from secondary school as part of the recruitment process. However, a number of private candidates (mainly mature candidates from other professions or in-service supply teachers) were also recruited every year. The Primary Diploma was a four-year course. Secondary recruits were taken from the School of Advanced Level (A level) studies, which is a post-secondary institution.

The Secondary Teacher Education Programme was a two-year programme, after which a graduate was awarded a Diploma in Education in the area of specialisation. The courses were

organised on the basis of the main national curriculum areas and they varied from year to year according to both the demands of the Ministry of Education and the number of students enrolled. After the Diploma in Secondary Education and after spending one year of practice in schools, the Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) proceeded for a Bachelor of Education degree in an overseas institution. For the past two decades agreements have been held with several overseas education providers, for those institutions to provide degree qualifications for Seychelles secondary teachers (National Institute of Education, 2002; Nolan, 2008). The main problems attributed with the arrangement to obtain degrees overseas were the cost implications for the Government and the fact that many teachers opted to stay in that country after completion of their studies and not return to Seychelles to teach. There is an apparent challenge, then, for Seychelles in relation to the motivation and commitment of new teachers to teach in Seychelles on completion of their qualifications.

For secondary education recruitment, figures on candidates joining teaching in the various subject areas were so low that in some years certain courses could not be run (refer to Appendix E for statistical information on the number of entrants into secondary teacher education courses and the number of graduates from 1999 to 2010). The Ministry attempted other strategies to obtain more teachers. This saw the introduction in 2003 of a special course within the School of A' Level Studies (SALS): the A' Level for Secondary Teaching' (National Institute of Education, 2002). Students enrolled in that course had to join the National Institute of Education after the two years of A' Level study provided they obtained a Grade D or better in the subject of specialisation. In comparison to the main group taking the A' Level courses, they were allowed to enrol in only two subjects instead of three. Tuition fees for these trainees were covered by the Government and the trainees also received a monthly allowance which increased every year as they moved higher in the course. In view of the number of teachers leaving the profession, the Ministry of Education introduced a bonding system for trainee teachers in 2002 (National Institute of Education, 2002). The bonding agreement required an NQT to work for the Ministry of Education for a period of five years.

While these strategies improved the numbers coming into secondary teacher education and secondary teaching, several problems have been identified which have impacted on commitment, standards and retention of teachers. Many students who entered into teacher education courses were academically weak, because entry requirements were lowered in

order to obtain more candidates. Candidates for languages increased, while it was still difficult to recruit teachers in shortage subjects, like Mathematics and Science (refer to Appendix E). A large number of those students who entered teacher education found that teaching was not their first career choice, but in most cases they had to stay on the course because of the bonding agreement. Others preferred to quit even if they had to reimburse the Government for the sum stipulated in the bonding agreement. In addition, many students used the course as a passageway to other professions, or to get the opportunity to go overseas for training. As mentioned earlier many opted to remain overseas after obtaining their qualification (National Institute of Education, 2002, 2007; Nolan, 2008). Issues relating to new teacher recruitment, then, revolve not just to around numbers but also around the quality of teachers.

The beginning of 2010 saw the beginning of a new era in education in Seychelles –with the setting up of the University of Seychelles (Seychelles NATION, 2009). The major change announced by the Vice Chancellor, Dr Rolph Payet, in the meeting with trainee teachers of the NIE on 2nd of December, 2009 (Seychelles NATION, 2009), was a shift in the secondary teacher education programme from the two-year Diploma in Secondary Education to a six-year degree course—the Bachelor of Education. This also applied to the primary programme. Thus the new university (UniSey) has taken on board the training of teachers, but this transfer of mandate has not been without challenges. As Hughes-d’Aeth (2011), noted in his report, “The planning of this change-over...seems to have been inadequately conceptualised and the system is now left with a possible disjuncture in the supply of newly trained teachers entering the education sector over the next 2-4 years” (p. 21). This situation therefore exacerbates the issue of teacher shortage, and the implication is the likelihood of recruiting more expatriate teachers, and also putting additional pressures on teachers already in the system.

To summarise, the Ministry of Education in Seychelles is faced with a number of challenges which need to be addressed in order to achieve the vision established in the Seychelles Strategy 2017 for education in Seychelles, which is to bring about a new shift in education along with a new mindset in order to achieve this transformation (Government of Seychelles, 2007). Already a series of reforms has been proposed, and some are being implemented in attempts to encourage more teachers to join teaching and to enhance the working conditions with the likelihood of improving teacher commitment and retention. For example, a new Teachers’ Scheme of Service (Government of Seychelles, 2010) became effective at the

beginning of 2010. A new Code of Conduct for Seychelles schools was introduced in 2010 to assist in handling students' misbehaviour and comportment (Department of Education, 2010). Nevertheless, there is still an inadequate number of teachers for the system and a problem of preparation and retention of teachers at different stages of the profession (refer to Appendix F for a graph showing the trend of teachers leaving at different points). These issues, along with the concerns about the number of expatriate teachers that are recruited every year, point to a need for empirical research in order to understand the complexity of the difficulties being experienced.

As research has shown, teacher commitment may be a significant factor which contributes to teachers' performance and determining teacher satisfaction, and that these have direct implications on retention and students' achievement (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Kushman, 1992; Louis, 1998; Nias, 1981; Tyree Jr, 1996). An investigation into commitment of secondary teachers has the potential to respond to this need for empirical data. Hence, the focus of this study is teacher commitment and how it is conceived, understood and experienced by teachers and education stakeholders in the context of secondary schools in Seychelles.

An introduction to key concepts

In this section I present an overview of the literature relating to teacher commitment, career stages, and retention. Each of these aspects is discussed in further detail in chapter two.

Teacher commitment

The term 'commitment' has been defined as "a strong belief that something is good and you should support it" (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2007). Commitment has been widely studied in organisational literature, particularly for its strength in improving the retention of employees and also because a committed workforce is generally associated with higher levels of productivity (Becker, 1960; A. Cohen, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Reichers, 1985). These studies have given impetus for research into commitment within education. In the last few decades there have been an increased number and range of studies focusing on teacher commitment, particularly with the changing nature of teachers' work along with the increased demand for more teachers and concerns about teacher quality (Chapman, 1984; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2004; Obanya, 2010;

OECD, 2005b). In explaining why teacher commitment should be emphasised, Park (2005) noted that teacher commitment is seen as:

...an internal force coming from teachers themselves who have needs for greater responsibility, variety, and challenge in their work as their educational levels have grown. Second, it is an external force coming from the reform movement seeking high standards and accountability, which are dependent upon teachers' voluntary commitment (pp. 461-462).

Focusing on psychological dimensions, Firestone and Pennell (1993) in their review of literature similarly highlighted the importance of the concept of teacher commitment, particularly because committed teachers were believed to be those with strong psychological ties to their schools, to their students and to their subject areas.

Other studies of teacher commitment have been largely focused on organisational commitment. These studies have been mainly quantitative using different organisational commitment scales to measure teacher commitment (Chan, Lau, Nie, Lim, & Hogan, 2008; Fresko, 1997; Joolideh & Yeshodhara, 2009; Reyes, 1990). Another group of researchers have noted the importance of the personal and moral dimensions in studies of teacher commitment (Crosswell, 2006; Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2007; Joffres & Haughey, 2001; Nias, 1981). For example, in a study conducted among primary teachers in the UK, Nias (1989) noted that the concept of commitment was used by teachers to distinguish teachers who were 'caring' and 'dedicated' from those who put their own interests first.

Although this range of ideas about what constitutes teacher commitment highlights a need to consider the multidimensional nature of teacher commitment, which incorporate both personal and external dimensions, studies focusing on the multifaceted aspects of teacher commitment are limited (Crosswell, 2006; Joffres & Haughey, 2001; Tyree Jr, 1996). Because of the different motives for studies of teacher commitment the findings from the different studies have been far from consistent. In addition, some researchers have noted that discrepancies in findings may be partly due to a lack of input generated by those experiencing commitment (Joffres & Haughey, 2001; Larkey & Morrill, 1995; Randall, 1990). It has also been noted that studies focusing on teacher commitment have been strongly focused on developed nations, but there are very limited data on such studies in developing countries (Joolideh & Yeshodhara, 2009).

Teacher commitment has emerged as a problematic concept that requires further exploration, particularly from the perspectives of teachers themselves. These aspects are addressed in this thesis.

Teachers' career stages

The notion of career stages is based on the assumption that there are distinct periods in one's work life. These periods or stages are characterised by the changing activities and differences in work attitudes and behaviours as well as the types of relationships that the individuals value (Aryee, Chay, & Chew, 1994; Slocum & Cron, 1985; Super, 1957). Early studies of career stages were closely linked to individuals' life stages or cycle (Erikson, 1964; Super, 1957). One of the most influential career stage models in vocational literature has been that of Super (1957, 1990). The model posits four identifiable stages in an individual's career: exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement. Even though this model shared similarities with sequential life cycle theories (see for example, Erikson, 1964), Super and his followers emphasized that movement throughout these different stages is far from linear (Salomone, 1996; Smart & Peterson, 1997; Super, 1990). They contend that considerable variation exists in the timing of the different stages and that individuals can miss out certain stages or revert to earlier stages, or even remain at a particular stage for a longer duration.

Because teacher commitment is connected to the work experiences of teachers, it is also closely linked to career stages. Some of the early perspectives of career stages have been used in studies on the work of teachers (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1993; Sikes, 1985). Studying teachers' career trajectories is a useful way of exploring what happens to teachers in their time in the teaching profession, whether they develop their professional identities as teachers, and what influences their decisions to stay or leave. It has been acknowledged that, "...teachers experience many shifts in stages throughout their careers, often meandering back and forth between periods of growth and frustration in response to factors in their personal and organizational lives" (Fessler, 1995, p. 171). This particular view indicates that there is no smooth career trajectory despite the passage of time. It also signals that there may be no simple way of understanding teacher commitment, as the nature and level of teacher commitment may shift with different stages and periods of growth and frustration in teachers' personal career trajectories.

Previous studies on teacher commitment across the teaching career have shown far from consistent findings (Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). In some studies commitment of teachers has been discussed in terms of the age and experience of teachers (Alutto, Hrebiniak, & Alonso, 1973; Sikes, 1985), thus following the chronological life cycle studies. For example, Alutto et al., (1973) found that from the teacher samples in their study, the older they were the more committed they became to the organisation. In contrast, other researchers showed that early in their career teachers are very committed, but this commitment declines as teachers become older (Fraser, Draper, & Taylor, 1998; Huberman, 1989). In a more recent study on teachers' professional lives, Day et al. (2007) reported that teachers' commitment can fluctuate during the course of their career depending on their personal beliefs and values, and based on events happening in their lives. These authors also noted the importance of contextual factors as influential on changes in teachers' levels of commitment.

Findings on teachers' commitment and how this is enacted throughout a teacher's career are far from consistent. Therefore, a better understanding of teachers' career trajectories can potentially provide insights into the fluctuations in commitment of teachers at the different stages. Such information is currently needed by policymakers and education leaders, because worldwide there are growing concerns about teacher supply relating to ageing teacher population, teacher recruitment and retention. In addressing these concerns it is important also to consider teachers' own perceptions and to look to research which explains such variations in their experiences in their career at different stages and how these variations influence their commitment to teaching and motivation to stay in the profession.

Recruitment and retention

Maintaining standards in education requires an adequate supply of teachers and the continuous effort of the system to retain those teachers. Studies that investigate teacher supply and demand focus on individuals' decisions to choose teaching as a career and the factors that influence their career trajectories. Education systems worldwide are constantly faced with the challenges of attracting good teachers and supporting them so that they remain in the profession (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). In their review of 46 studies on recruitment and retention in the US, Guarino et al., (2006) noted that “ the dual goals of recruiting and retaining effective teachers are often difficult to realize because of insufficient or sometimes dwindling resources” (p. 173). Studies focusing on teacher retention are linked

to teacher attrition. These studies discuss factors influencing teachers' decisions to stay or leave teaching.

Teacher commitment has been closely associated with concepts like teacher recruitment, teacher retention and teacher attrition. Research indicates that teachers' levels of commitment are influenced by the individual's decision to enter teaching, which in turn has an impact on the teacher's decision to remain in the profession (Rots & Aelterman, 2008). The issue of retention of teachers continues to be a major concern for many countries (Billingsley, 1993; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Chapman, 1984; Guarino et al., 2006; OECD, 2005b). Studies exploring retention of teachers often investigate people's decisions to choose teaching as a career in view of concerns about recruitment of teachers and in order to find out who remains in teaching and why (Barmby, 2006; Beng Huat, Gorard, & White, 2004; Guarino et al., 2006).

Concerns have been raised about the high percentage of teachers approaching retirement age in some countries, mainly developed countries (OECD, 2005b). Research on recruitment and retention in these contexts has tended to focus not on issues of recruitment but rather on how to retain teachers once they have been recruited (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Issues of recruitment (getting suitable people into the profession), are of potentially greater importance in developing countries, including Seychelles. However, retention and attrition in developing countries are more complex in view of the discrepancies between the levels of development compounded by an acknowledged lack of empirical data (Chapman, 1984; Cooper & Alvarado, 2006; Obanya, 2010). These issues are discussed in more depth in Chapter Two.

The conceptual understandings of these ideas are complex and intertwined. Much of the literature relating to teacher commitment, career stages and retention is grounded in the education systems of developed countries. There is very little that specifically addresses the issues from the perspective of developing countries. Many of these studies from both developed and developing nations employed quantitative research approaches and therefore there was little that brought to the fore the experiences of the teachers as voiced by the teachers themselves. This study provides a means of addressing in part these gaps in the literature – gaps relating to teacher commitment in developing countries and the direct report of the experiences of the teachers. Moreover, this study draws on issues of motivation to

teach, career stage and retention when discussing commitment of secondary teachers. In focusing on this range of factors the study provides a more holistic or nuanced view of teacher commitment than studies that focus on only one aspect.

Positioning myself

In qualitative research it is important for the researcher at the outset to locate herself/himself within the context of the research. An assumption is that the choice of the research topic and methodology reflects the interests of the researcher and her/his background in terms of what she/he brings to the research (Brizuela, Stewart, Carillo, & Berger, 2000; Creswell, 2009; J. Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006; Hertz, 1997; Patton, 2002). I come into this research as an education professional grounded in a post-colonial experience of living and working in Seychelles. I have witnessed the transition of the education system from colonial to that of an independent small island state. My own experience as a child, student, teacher, parent, historian and teacher educator, shape my political view, my research interests and my theoretical perspectives. My theoretical grounding also reflects my patriotism and the desire to see the realisation of the educational goals of my country in the face of emerging needs and challenges.

I have worked in education for the past three decades, including involvement in teaching at both primary and secondary level, the training and monitoring of both pre-service and in-service teachers, the development and implementation of the new national curriculum, and the review of both the National Curriculum and the primary teacher education course. In the last five years, as the Assistant Director for Studies at the National Institute of Education, I have been involved with the development and implementation of training programmes for both pre-service and in-service teachers. This gave me the opportunity to work closely with schools to organise placements for practicum and visit trainees on teaching practice as well as to chair debriefing meetings after the practicum rounds. I have observed that fewer young people are joining the teaching profession. I have also observed a trend of both NQT and experienced teachers leaving the profession.

At the time of initiating this research, I was concerned about teacher recruitment and retention in Seychelles, and I continue to be concerned about these factors. Based on feedback from trainee teachers after their professional experience rounds, it appears that

experienced teachers in schools are discouraging both trainee teachers and NQTs from pursuing a career in teaching. Furthermore, the system does not seem to support new teachers in the profession. There is no proper mechanism for induction or mentoring for newly qualified teachers, and the shortage of teaching staff allows practically no time for NQTs to observe other teachers and/or obtain any sort of support in their first years as a qualified teacher.

Another observation pertains to the academic results of secondary five students, which are not to the expected or desired standard (refer to Appendix D). As a result of a perceived decline in academic standards, post-secondary institutions are lowering their entry criteria to meet their quota for entry into their institutions. This includes the National Institute of Education, which was seen as a way to encourage more young people to take up teaching as a profession. An apparent consequence of this lowering in entry criteria, though, is the further lowering of the standard of teachers joining the profession. The problem of retention is more evident at secondary level, where, the number of vacancies is equivalent to or exceeds the number of teachers joining the profession in some subjects and years (refer to Appendix G which shows the number of secondary vacancies and recruits for the years 2004 to 2008). In some subjects (including Mathematics, Technology and Enterprise, Information Technology and Physical Education) there have been years where the number of resignations exceeded the number joining. These concerns have prompted my desire to investigate the factors influencing commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles at different stages of their profession, and the perceptions of school management and policy makers about the commitment of secondary teachers and their trajectories.

Significance of the study

One of the problems that emerged from literature about teacher commitment as a whole is the lack of emphasis on the individual teacher's personal experiences and commitment to teaching. This study focuses particularly on the experiences and perceptions of the teachers themselves, and the perceptions of other education stakeholders in relation to teacher commitment.

There have been some empirical data produced by Delcy (2003) on teacher retention in Seychelles, on teacher education by Barallon (2003) and Jean-Louis (2005), on induction and

mentoring by Estico (2005), and on selection and recruitment of teachers by Lebon (2009). None of these studies, however, has attempted to investigate the factors that influence the commitment of teachers in secondary schools in Seychelles. Hence, an intention in this thesis is to explore the various factors influencing teacher commitment and the implications that these factors may have on secondary education, an area acknowledged as lacking comprehensive research attention.

While this study is specifically focused on Seychelles, its significance and potential contribution to knowledge extend to international academic and professional communities. Several studies have been conducted in the area of teacher commitment (Crosswell, 2006; Day et al., 2007; Henkin & Holliman, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2005; Nias, 1989; Tyree Jr, 1996). However, this study will complement this body of research because the context is different. Crosswell (2006) noted that studies on teacher commitment would provide different results based on the specificity of the context of study. Most of the studies on teacher commitment are located in developed countries and there is a paucity of empirical data on the notion of teacher commitment in developing, post-colonial countries, where historical and political factors different to those of developed countries might be expected to influence the implementation of the education policy. Furthermore, these studies have focused on commitment of primary and secondary teachers in a particular place and time, rather than on how the nature and level of teacher commitment may vary across career trajectories, with the exception of Day et al. (2007) whose seminal work on professional lives of teachers conducted in the UK, investigated commitment and career trajectories.

This study focuses on secondary teachers and considers three specific career stages: first year as a NQT, five years of teaching experience and ten or more years of experience. Teachers who left the profession at the three different stages have been included in the study. This focus on differences relating to career stage is also an aspect that has not been looked at much in past research. The study explores previous conceptualisations of teacher commitment and builds on these in an attempt to consider the multi-dimensional aspects of teacher commitment and how commitment or lack of this can influence teacher retention. Many of the issues addressed in the study are therefore of broad relevance and interest internationally, as well as particular interest and relevance to Seychelles.

Research Questions

The inspiration for this thesis is a challenge that I perceived relating to teacher retention in Seychelles and my concern about the relationship between this and teacher commitment. The study was primarily concerned with perceptions of teachers about the phenomenon of teacher commitment and the factors that are influencing their commitment at the different stages in the profession. It also includes exploration of perceptions of other stakeholders as another lens for understanding the factors influencing commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles.

The main research question is:

How can an exploration of teacher commitment help to develop understanding of teacher career pathways and teacher retention?

The sub-questions are:

1. What are the perceptions of teacher commitment among secondary teachers and other education stakeholders in Seychelles?
2. What are the factors that influence the nature and level of commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles at different stages of their teaching careers, from the experiences of teachers themselves and from the perspectives of education stakeholders?
3. Why should educationalists be concerned about teacher commitment?

These questions underpin all aspects of the research design and the analysis of the data that emerges.

Thesis outline

The thesis comprises seven chapters. This first chapter has introduced the purpose of the study and thesis intentions. The second chapter presents an extended examination of the literature relevant to the phenomenon of teacher commitment. The review extends to other inter-related constructs that include teacher supply and career trajectories and provide a framework for discussing teacher commitment. In chapter three a detailed discussion of the methodological and philosophical underpinnings that underlie the study are presented. This includes a discussion on the theoretical assumptions for the study and the rationale for grounding the study in a qualitative paradigm, using phenomenography, phenomenology and

case study approaches. Chapter four presents the phenomenographic findings relevant to the first sub-question of the study. The chapter also discusses the outcome space of these four categories. Chapter five presents findings for the four case studies focusing on the second sub-question. In Chapter six, findings on the perceptions of headteachers and policymakers of the factors influencing teachers' commitment at the different stages of the profession are presented and discussed. Chapter seven is the concluding chapter. It discusses the main findings and presents key contributions in terms of both educational knowledge and methodology. Implications for policy, schools and teachers are discussed and suggestions for further research are provided.

Chapter Two: Being a teacher

Introduction

The work of a teacher is complex to understand (Crosswell, 2006; Day & Gu, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003). Teachers' influence on students and their learning is far reaching and shapes their lives to come. Teacher commitment is an important area of study and has potential to inform understandings about the work of teachers, their moral purpose. Today teachers face continual changes and the pressure to keep pace with policy and curriculum initiatives is on-going. Day et al., (2007), purported that there are no successful education reforms without committed teachers. Teacher commitment is closely related to or influenced by such constructs such as career choice, recruitment and retention, and other elements which connect the personal and professional identities of teachers. Thus it is important to unpack these encompassing components. This chapter presents a review of relevant literature on teacher commitment in support of this study. As there is a large number of variables which could be discussed in relation to teacher commitment, it has been necessary to restrict the review to those most pertinent to the focus of this research; namely, those relating specifically to recruitment and retention, career stages and conceptualisations of teacher commitment.

Teacher recruitment and retention

Issues of teacher supply (often distinguished as teacher recruitment and retention), are key issues for education systems as well as individual schools. If the goal of an education system is to provide quality education to students, an adequate supply of competent teachers is required. But concerns with regards to quality are not only attributed to issues of recruitment; it is a matter of retaining teachers who enter the profession. As the report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2003), pointed out a few decades ago "...teacher turnover is now undermining teaching quality and it is driving teacher shortage" (p. 8).

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports take an on-going interest in issues of teacher supply and quality. For example, the report of 2005 provides a snapshot of the major concerns of the different countries with regard to teacher

supply. It includes a comprehensive analysis of trends and developments in the teacher workforce in the member countries around the world using country reports compiled over the period 2002-2004 (OECD, 2005b). The report asserts that at that time, most member countries were facing the problem of having an ageing teacher population, while finding it difficult to attract well-qualified new entrants into teaching and retain them. Issues of teacher supply, preparation and retention and their impact on quality teaching and learning remain high on the OECD agenda as evident in the reports of 2011 and 2012 (Schleicher, 2011, 2012).

These concerns though extend beyond OECD member countries and are compounded by the declining perceptions of teaching as a career, reflected particularly in the low salary and social status in comparison to other professions, which impact on people's decisions to choose teaching as a career (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006; Kane & Mallon, 2006, Obanya, 2010). The extent of these concerns is evident in the increasing number of international studies focusing on the teaching profession, particularly the work of teachers and the range of associated factors influencing the quality of education (Jensen, Sandoval-Hernandez, Knoll, & Gonzalez, 2012; OECD, 2009, 2010, 2012; Schleicher, 2011, 2012, Pearson, 2012).

Many studies on teacher recruitment and retention have been conducted from the perspective of managerial workforce planning. Such studies present statistical information about teacher supply and demand, focussing on issues like the number of teachers needed, teacher deployment and distribution, student-teacher ratios and teacher attrition (see for example, Guarino et al., 2006; Jensen et al., 2012; OECD, 2011). Other studies provide explanations from the teachers themselves on reasons for choosing teaching as a career and the factors that influence their decisions to stay or leave. This section presents a synthesis on the impacts that recruitment, attrition and retention have on teacher supply and teacher commitment, which all form an integral part of teacher quality.

Motivation to teach

Making teaching an attractive career choice in order to entice quality recruits into the profession remains a challenge for many jurisdictions. The efforts of most education systems relate to getting the best possible teachers in front of students. With this growing concern of teacher quality and teacher retention, the importance of finding out why people are attracted to teaching has received attention from a number of scholars (Cameron, Baker, & Lovett,

2006; Day et al., 2007; Hargreaves, 2005; Johnson, Birkeland, Donaldson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu & Peske, 2004; Lovett, 2007).

Demographic characteristics of those who enter the profession and the factors that influence their decisions to choose teaching as a career have formed a major part of the existing literature on teacher supply (OECD, 2005b, Guarino et al., 2008). As Schlechty & Vance (1983) posited, “The characteristics of any occupation are determined by the characteristics and qualities of those who are recruited to the occupation, those who are selected from among those who are recruited and those the occupation is able to retain as continuing members from among those selected” (p. 470). This concern about teacher quality expressed thirty years ago continues to be problematic in current discussions in the education arena. An individual’s motivation to choose teaching as a career tends to be related to his or her overall commitment and satisfaction once in the profession, and determines the individual’s intention to remain or leave teaching. Consequently, studies into decisions to enter into teaching are important because of the connection that has been shown to exist between teacher motivation and retention.

Investigations into the motivations for choosing teaching as a career have been varied in both methodological directions and foci, hence yielding diverse findings. Some researchers have ascribed different categories for people who decide to choose teaching as a career. Another group have investigated gender differences in teaching as career choice, while yet another group have explored the reasons that some people change careers to join the teaching profession. So there are multiple ways of investigating why people choose teaching as a career and some of the key features of pertinent literature from across the world are explored in the sections which follow.

Categorising teaching as career choice

Some scholars have ascribed a range of categories in an attempt to provide rich explanations on the choice of teaching as a career among different groups of people in different settings. One of the most common explanations of reasons for joining teaching relate to three main categories: altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Those grouped under the altruistic category typically viewed teaching as a career of social importance and expressed the desire to help children to succeed and make a positive contribution to society. This is often referred to as the moral purpose of teaching. From the research literature, trainee teachers who held

intrinsic motives for entering teaching gave their main reasons as expected job satisfaction in view of their passion for the profession or for the subject. The reasons for those with extrinsic motivation were mainly in relation to the rewards that the profession held for them, maybe in terms of the school holidays or salary and status.

Altruistic motivation to teach

Altruistic reasons have been most influential in investigations of people's reasons for entering teaching, particularly in developed countries. For example, Young, B. (1995) conducted a study conducted in the United States among 272 pre-service teachers and the main reasons which emerged for entering the teaching profession were characterised as altruistic. Data from this survey identified some of the main responses to be related to the desire to work with children, and to contribute towards society, among other reasons. In the United Kingdom, Thornton and Reid (2001) investigated the views of 1,611 undergraduate and postgraduate students in an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme from 14 different education providers about their choice of primary school teaching as a career. Questionnaires were used followed by 148 follow-up interviews to yield further depth on the reasons why participants opted for a teaching career. Similar to Young's (1995) study, altruistic reasons were dominant in participants' responses. The main reason for joining teaching was the enjoyment in working with children, followed by job satisfaction and the challenge of teaching as a career. Thornton & Reid (2001) referred to this notion as the 'pull' factors, as participants "were 'pulled' towards teaching for very positive, often altruistic, reasons" (p.111). On the other hand, the findings also indicated the 'push' factors, which were common mainly among male participants. These participants commented negatively about previous jobs, hence, in a way they were pushed towards the teaching profession.

In a comparative study, Kyriacou, Kunc, Stephens and Hultgren (2003) explored expectations of teaching as a career held by a group of 121 Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students in York, England and 75 Stavanger Bachelor of Education (BEd) students in Norway. Questionnaires were administered and the findings showed that the majority of students from York entered teaching for altruistic reasons as compared to the Stavanger group where intrinsic reasons were more prominent. The York participants shared a general view that they would be making a socially worthwhile contribution to society.

Altruistic reasons for joining the profession were also the major finding from an Australian study conducted by Manuel and Hughes (2006). The participants consisted of a cohort of 79 secondary trainee teachers following a five-year full-time combined undergraduate and ITE programme at the University of Sydney. The study featured a questionnaire that collected data on the cohort's background characteristics and what prompted their decision to enter teaching, as well as their perceptions, expectations and goals of teaching as a career. Among the participants 65.8% expressed that their choice of teaching was influenced by their desire to work with young people and make a difference in their lives.

Altruistic motives to enter teaching are hence seen to be linked to the passion for the profession, an ethic of care for children and the inner drive to make positive contributions to society. Consequently those entering teaching for altruistic reasons are considered to be more enthusiastic than their peers. They are also seen to have the tendency to be more committed and stay longer in the profession.

Intrinsic motivation to teach

Some studies have established that intrinsic factors are also common motivators for choosing teaching as a career. Some of the intrinsic reasons that are commonly given range from opportunities for learning or advancement, the expected pride upon student's success and being devoted to a particular subject of specialisation. The 79 secondary trainee teachers in Manuel and Hughes' (2006) study were drawn into teaching by their engagement with the specialist subject area which they were going to teach. Intrinsic factors were the second most common group of factors for the two groups of participants (121 PGCE students from York, England and 75 BEd students from Stavanger Norway), in the comparative study mentioned earlier (Kyriacou et al., 2003). The intrinsic reason was mainly attributed to the expected feeling of pride from students' achievements.

In a report from a study conducted in New Zealand, Kane and Mallon (2006) elucidated that intrinsic motivation and encouragement by others were the main factors influencing recruitment into teaching. The study also posited that the most significant factors that influence people to stay in the teaching profession were commitment to children, enjoyment of their job and doing a job of which they felt proud. This study was founded on both quantitative and qualitative methods using questionnaires and interviews, and the participants

ranged from school teachers, principals, members of boards of trustees, student teachers, and senior students.

Extrinsic motivation to teach

Fewer studies reported extrinsic factors as the most influential motivators to enter teaching. The most common among the extrinsic factors cited in previous studies are issues like holidays, salary and other aspects of the job which are not inherent of the teaching work itself. For example, among the two groups of student teachers in their study Kyriacou, Kunc, Stephens and Hultgren (2003) reported that the highest response of the Stavanger students was related to the amount of holiday time.

The issue of status of the teaching profession very often emerged in findings as factors influencing teachers' career decisions (Chapman & Carrier, 1990; Cushman, 2000; D. Hall & Langton, 2006; Kane & Mallon, 2006; OECD, 2005b). A large-scale project commissioned by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand, entitled 'The Teacher Status Project', was dedicated to the issue of status of teachers and teaching (D. Hall & Langton, 2006; Kane & Mallon, 2006). The first phase of the project aimed at presenting the views of the public through focus group interviews. This was followed by the second phase which was survey interviews with 1145 participants including youths, adults and employers (D. Hall & Langton, 2006). The evidence which emerged showed that teaching was not a highly rated job in terms of power, money and fame. Among the factors influencing perceptions of teaching was the opinion that teaching was different from other careers in that "...everyone has (or thinks they have) a highly informed view of what teachers do on a day to day basis" (p. 31), because most individuals go through the student phase at some points in their lives. The implications of this according to Hall and Langton, are that "...the people in the profession are the dominant force in shaping our view on teaching and teachers" (ibid).

Both the Hall and Langton (2006) and the Kane and Mallon (2006) reports acknowledged that decisions to choose teaching or to leave the profession are not influenced by the perceived status of teaching. However, Kane and Mallon (2006) concluded teachers had a poor self-image which was seen as a critical factor undermining the scope of attracting and retaining quality candidates.

Although financial factors such as salary often emerge as extrinsic reasons for people entering teaching, these have not always been rated highly. However, in studies which looked at reasons why people do not choose teaching (see for example Thornton, Bricheno and Reid, 2002; Carrington & Tomlin, 2000; Rawlinson, Essex-Cater, Bolden & Constable, 2003) the issue of pay is ranked high on the list of reasons, followed by workload.

The ideas emerging from literature on altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motives to teach show that for any given teacher, there is often a combination of factors that are influential on their decisions. For reasons of social desirability some teachers may foreground altruistic and intrinsic motivations in conversations with researchers, rather than extrinsic motives. Diverse methodologies have been used to explore these deterrents to enter teaching as well as other dimensions of why people are attracted to a career in teaching as discussed in the following section.

Diverse methodological foci of studies on teaching as career choice

A range of methodologies have been employed in studies about teaching as career choice. As a result the findings that have emerged brought about diverse dimensions of issues relating to why people choose or do not choose teaching as a career. For example, in the US, Nieto (2005) conducted a study among twenty-one K12 teachers with diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. The reasons for joining teaching were identified through participants' stories and four different categories were ascribed to the findings. Nieto (2005) named the first category 'taking the long way', which grouped people who did not particularly want to be teachers, but shifted to teaching after spending time in other jobs. Her second category was those who viewed teaching as a 'spiritual journey' or a 'political commitment' or 'vocation' in seeking to make sense of the world. The other categories were those of 'helping students' and 'becoming fully human', which related to teaching as an opportunity to help young people find their place in the world and as a way of making a positive contribution to the public. Despite the different names given to these categories, these categories reflect altruistic in nature.

In comparison, six categories emerged from a study conducted by Jarvis and Woodrow (2005) among a group of secondary trainee teachers in the UK. Questionnaires containing open-ended questions were administered to 483 student teachers with diverse subject specialisations. The students' reasons for joining teaching were career-related. In the first

category 45% percent of the participants were attracted to teaching because they thought it had the potential to be challenging, rewarding and a secure career choice. The second category of responses with 16% of participants was the love for the subject, and the third was the desire to work with children. The other categories reflected passion for the profession, job satisfaction and those who simply wanted a change in career. A small minority of these trainees had no intention to teach, but were using the PGCE course as a stepping stone to another career. These findings reflect somewhat different trend from that of Nieto in the US, where altruistic reasons were significantly dominant.

From another perspective Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) identified three main categories from a survey of 297 undergraduate students in the UK. The three groups were those who were 'definitely not considering teaching' (N=102), those who were 'seriously considering teaching' (N=40) and those who were 'undecided' (N=155). Using questionnaires participants were required to rate the importance of 20 factors in influencing their decisions for choosing teaching as a career and to relate them to the extent that these factors were present in the profession. The most popular factor which emerged in all the three groups was "a job that I will find enjoyable" (p.117).

A more recent research project in the US was conducted by Pop and Turner (2009) to find the career intentions of 67 pre-service teachers. A survey method was used with follow-up interviews. Similar to Kyriacou and Coulthard's (2000) categorisation, three groups were identified, which were named as the 'fully committed to teaching', the 'undecided' and the 'not currently interested in teaching'. Both the 'fully committed to teaching' and the 'undecided' groups provided altruistic reasons for entering into teaching. The 'fully committed' participants had always dreamt about becoming a teacher and they wanted to make a difference in the lives of their students. The 'undecided' group entered teaching for similar reasons, but they felt that teaching was not challenging enough. They were therefore using the programme as a stepping stone to other careers, but education related. Whereas the 'not currently interested in teaching group' related their decision to extrinsic factors. They perceived teaching as a low status job with unfavourable salary scheme. Such descriptive accounts as used in this study allow for in-depth understanding of student teachers' perceptions of teaching as a career choice. Another issue of concern is in relation to having more males in the teaching profession. Studies exploring the differences in gender interests in teaching as a career are explored in the following section.

Gender concerns in motivation to teach

There is a growing body of research with particular focus on factors influencing male students to enter the teaching profession (Cushman, 1999, 2000, 2005; Guarino et al., 2006; Jensen et al., 2012; Livingstone, 2003; Mulholland & Hansen, 2003; Schleicher, 2011; Sexton, 2009). This is because of the increasing concern about gender balance in teaching as women dominate the profession particularly in primary schools (Guarino et al., 2006; Livingstone, 2003; Mulholland & Hansen, 2003; OECD, 2005b). From the records of the OECD countries more than half of the member countries reported a population of over 80% female teachers in the primary sector (OECD, 2005b, p. 54).

The number of male teachers entering teaching has been of particular concern for New Zealand. An OECD observer noted that 88% of the teaching force in New Zealand were females (Santiago, 2001). In a review of literature about men in primary schools in New Zealand, Livingstone (2003) highlighted the decreasing numbers of males who were choosing primary teaching as a career. The main concerns addressed in the review were in relation to the characteristics of males entering teacher education programmes including the selection process, teacher preparation, withdrawal points and their perceptions of teaching. A number of studies have been conducted by Cushman focusing on the increasing demands for more males in teaching, the barriers that are stopping males from entering teaching and the likely consequences of this gender imbalance (Cushman, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2005). For example, the study of 1008 Year 13 male students conducted in 2000, reported the low status of the teaching profession, low salary, teaching being a feminised profession and physical contact with students as the main barriers to choosing teaching as a career.

In Australia, a study was conducted among 16 new male graduates about their motivation to join teaching (Mulholland & Hansen, 2003). Among the participants eight joined the teacher education course straight from school, four transferred from other courses and two were career changers. Semi-structured interviews were used, which also encouraged participants to provide narratives to account for their pre-service experiences. The findings revealed that working with children was the main motivation for choosing teaching as a career and for the participants teaching was seen as a career with good working conditions. While only two out of the 16 teachers were career changers, there is a growing trend for more people to shift to teaching from other careers. The extent to which people choose teaching as a second career and the factors that affect these decisions are explored in the next section.

Career changers choosing teaching

A recent trend in attempting to cater for teacher shortages has been the recruitment of career changers into the teaching profession. Studies focusing on the reasons driving the change of career among the career changers entering teaching can inform policymakers about the effectiveness of this trend and provide possible insights for recruitment and retention strategies. A growing number of studies are focusing on the reasons for those people to change their careers and join teaching (Chambers, 2002; Johnson et al., 2004; Lovett, 2007; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003). For example, in an effort to understand the motivation, priorities and experiences of the new generation of teachers in the US, Johnson et al., (2004) conducted a longitudinal study among 50 first and second year teachers who entered into the teaching profession through two different paths; first career entrants and career changers. The study revealed that for first career entrants the main reasons for joining the teaching profession were more altruistic and intrinsic compared to the mid-career entrants, who saw teaching as a better opportunity than their previous jobs.

A similar study to that of Johnson and his colleagues was conducted among 57 teachers in New Zealand in a longitudinal project of Teachers of Promise (TOPs), which aimed to explore the perceptions of teachers judged to have the potential to become ‘strong’ and ‘promising’ teachers (Cameron et al., 2006). Thirty-five of the participants in the study were career changers. Lovett (2007), one of the TOPs researchers, has written that first career participants’ decisions were influenced by family and friends, love for children and the desire to make a valuable contribution in their lives. They viewed teaching as a personal challenge, while a small group was also attracted to the rewards of pay, some favourable working conditions and career opportunities. The career changers on the other hand shifted to teaching for a variety of reasons ranging from “the desire for more personal autonomy, the disillusionment of current job, the need for creative outlet, a feeling of making a difference to others, and wanting a job with more meaning, challenge and a future” (p. 45). Eight of the first-career participants came from families of teachers and teaching for them was their most favoured career, whereas twenty-one of the career changers had experience in working with children or youths in their previous careers which contributed to their decisions to change.

In the US, for example, Crow, Levine and Nager (1990) conducted an ethnographic study among 13 career changers who were enrolled in a teacher education programme in Bank Street College of Education. The findings revealed that career changers enter into teaching

for different reasons, which were grouped into three categories. The ‘homecomers’ were those who saw teaching as a career that they had always wanted to enter. According to them their initial plan to enter teaching was thwarted either by contradictory parental guidance, negative attitude of the profession by society, market forces or financial factors. The ‘converted’ group were participants who reconsidered their professional plans and decided to join teaching as a consequence of various factors or events in their lives. Crow et al., (1990) named the third category the ‘unconverted’, which grouped those career changers who had advanced degrees and had attained high status and positions in their previous occupations. Compared to the ‘homecomers’ and the ‘converted’ they were disenchanted with teaching and were not likely to pursue it in the future.

Chambers (2002) also interviewed 10 pre-service and in-service secondary teachers in the US to find out the reasons that career changers gave for entering teaching. The findings showed that altruistic reasons were the main motivating factors for the career changers’ choice of teaching. Another popular reason was the participants’ perceptions of the personal benefits of teaching. The second-career teachers also believed that they bring into the teaching profession valuable skills and new ideas which they have acquired ‘from their previous careers’, hence according to them they are more committed to help “students apply their knowledge to the real world” than the first-career entrants (p. 212).

Further explorations into the attraction of teaching as a career among the career changers have been provided by Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003). The study was conducted among 34 secondary student teachers in the UK who had shifted to teaching from other careers. The in-depth interviews probed into motivating factors for their change of career and the attributed factors that may influence their decisions to remain in teaching. Six different profiles of career changers were identified: “the parent, the successful careerist, the freelancer, the late starter, the serial careerist, and the young career changer” (p. 98). The reasons that the participants gave for switching to teaching were grouped according to the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. Similar to Thornton and Reid’s (2001) perspective, the ‘push’ factors referred to the negative aspects of their previous jobs which pushed them to quit, while the ‘pull’ factors were the elements that attracted them into teaching.

So with the growing concerns for having the adequate supply of qualified teachers, researchers are exploring the different pathways into teaching with the aim of meeting the

needs of not only the teacher demand, but also that of having quality teachers in order to improve the education standards. Attractions of career changers into the teaching profession have the potential to point out trends in commitment to teaching as long-term or short-term career. However, the issue of teacher supply in developing countries often show different trends. This is explored in the following section.

Teaching as a career choice in developing countries

While most research on teaching as a career choice is based in developed western nations, there is a scantiness of such research in developing countries. The few studies that have been located have yielded somewhat diverse findings, which often contradict results from developed countries. For example, in a study conducted through a survey with 271 graduates of six teachers' colleges in Jamaica and the Caribbean islands, Brown (1992), concluded that the main reasons for choosing teaching were altruistic, similar to findings in North America. The main reason for their career choice was the love of and wanting to work with children, the second being the desire to make a contribution to society. Extrinsic reasons appeared third in popularity with the main reason being that no other job was available. Such a reason did not feature, or was not significantly identified in studies conducted in developed countries, but was popular in studies conducted in other developing countries.

Contrary to Brown's study, the findings of another study conducted by Evans (1993) in Jamaica, 55% of her teacher sample opted for extrinsic reasons to join teaching. The most popular reasons were uncertainty about their future and nothing else to do. Similar findings were obtained from Yong's (1995) study among a sample of year 1, 2 and 3 teacher trainees who were enrolled in the Certificate in Education programme in the University of Brunei Darussalam. Forty-five percent of his participants entered the teaching profession mainly for extrinsic reasons with the most popular reason being that there was no other choice. These participants entered the teaching profession as a last resort and the main reason given was failure to gain entry into another profession. The second extrinsic reason was the influence of others, followed by salary, job security and vacation. Intrinsic reasons made up the second group and the main reasons given were ambition to become a teacher and opportunity for academic development. The third category of reasons was altruistic with the main ones being love of working with children and the desire to contribute to society.

Bastick (2000), developed an instrument to measure the motivation to join the teaching profession in Jamaica. The model was an extrinsic, intrinsic and altruistic (EIA) factor model. Open interviews were conducted with 96 student teachers to find the most prevalent reason, this was followed by an island-wide survey among 1444 student teachers based on nineteen most prevalent reasons given. The survey analysis showed that extrinsic factors were dominant, a finding that also contrasted with that of Brown (1992). This first group of factors related to reasons like, the number of school holidays, the low cost of Teachers' College fees, the salary, job security and status (Bastick, 2000). The second group was more intrinsic with reasons like the love for the profession and seeing teaching as a life-long career. The third group was altruistic and the main reasons provided were making a worthwhile contribution to the social and academic development of others and the love for children.

Exploring teacher education in the context of Ghana, Akyeampong and Stephens (2002) concluded that trainee teachers' motivation to enter the teaching profession were mainly altruistic and extrinsic in nature. Among the most common altruistic reasons given were the 'desire to impart knowledge' or 'an interest to work with children' and the desire to contribute towards raising standards of education in the country. Two main extrinsic factors which emerged were job security and social mobility. Therefore, while some of those student teachers felt that teaching provided job security, for others teaching was a gateway to further training, which was often used like a stepping stone to other professions. Although altruistic responses were dominant among the participants, it is noted that a majority of the student teachers (79%) in this study attributed "poor conditions of service as a major disincentive of teaching" (p. 269). The authors thus concluded that even though student teachers were aware that teaching was a low paid job with a low status, the "potential benefits that fitted their ambitions" outweighed these low perceptions.

Even if most of these studies have been conducted a few decades ago, the concerns for teacher recruitment and teacher quality remain critical for developing nations. For example, Obanya (2010) dedicated such a title as "Bringing the teacher back to the African classroom" in a recent UNESCO publication, to emphasise the extent of the problems of having an adequate supply of qualified teachers for African countries.

A survey of research literature relating to motivation to teach suggests that there are some common trends in choosing teaching as a career between developed and developing

countries, but with varied emphasis in different contexts. Altruistic reasons were more common in developed nations, whereas extrinsic factors were more popular in developing countries. With fewer employment opportunities in developing countries, student teachers tend to see teaching as secure employment, as compared to developed countries where there is likely more competing employment opportunities (Bastick, 2000; OECD, 2005b). With more emphasis on extrinsic factors and less on altruistic ones bring serious doubt about the student teachers' future career performance. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that developed countries are not encountering problems in attracting candidates into the teaching profession.

Considering new developments in career trends, for example, Johnson et al., (2004) posited that “those who consider teaching today have an array of alternative career options, many offering greater social status, providing more comfortable work environments, and offering far higher pay than teaching” (p. 19). The implications for any education system therefore can be more complex in terms of strategies for recruitment and teacher preparation, retention and the overall cost involved in the whole process. As more choices and options are available, there is a likelihood that the number of people entering teaching as a second or third career will increase; however, this does not imply that there will be a more stable or a better quality teacher workforce. While these types of candidates can offer more maturity in the profession, very often the working conditions do not match their expectations, hence they are likely to stay in the classroom for a short number of years. Therefore factors which make the profession attractive to new entrants are also likely to encourage people to remain committed to the task of teaching and influence their decision to remain in the profession. In addition, when considering new recruits into teaching it is important to understand the tension between the different factors at play, for example, what characterises those who enter for largely altruistic or intrinsic reasons as compared to those who have more extrinsic reasons. How these factors interplay with the experiences of these teachers and their trajectories have the potential to highlight issues that need to be addressed. Issues pertaining to teacher shortage, retention and attrition of teachers are discussed in the next section.

Attrition and retention

In relation to the ongoing situation of teacher supply, teacher shortage resulting from high rate of attrition and low retention is one of the main challenges that most countries have faced and continue to face (Obanya, 2010; OECD, 2009, 2010; Schleicher, 2011). About eight

years ago the OECD report (2005b), highlighted two main concerns in relation to teacher shortage: that of the number of teachers in general, particularly in areas like Mathematics and Science and the number of teachers reaching retirement age. The report noted the wide variations among member countries in the number of teachers who leave public schools each year, whereas See, Gorard and White (2004) from their review of two studies on retention and attrition contended that there was no evidence of any crisis of teacher supply and demand in England and Wales. Data from studies conducted in the US a decade ago (Ingersoll, 2001a, 2001b; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003) also showed that there were more than enough prospective teachers trained each year in the United States, although not in every field and a large proportion were elementary teachers rather than secondary teachers. Today the challenges of teacher shortage and retention of quality teachers are still being highlighted in reports and other publications (see for example, Schleicher, 2011; OECD, 2012). In particular, a recent OECD report Schleicher (2012), referred to concerns for education systems in OECD countries of recruiting high-quality teachers and retaining them once they are recruited.

Losses and leaks

The increase in the demand for teachers in many countries has been attributed to a high increase in student enrolment and an ageing teacher population. Evidence from an earlier report of the OECD (2005b) the assumption of the ageing teacher population was supported based on country reports. The evidence showed that on average 26% of primary teachers and 31% of secondary teachers were over the age of 50 years, and in some countries, the average jumped to 40%. Concerns have been raised with regard to the effects that an ageing teacher workforce have on schools and education systems around the world (Harris & Adams, 2007, Ingersoll, 2001a, 2001b; OECD, 2005b).

There are different views, however, on the question of teacher attrition due to an ageing teacher population. Earlier in the millennium Ingersoll (2001b) contended that the ageing teacher population is not the only problem; the more complicated problem is that many of those who decide to join teaching leave before reaching retirement age. In the analysis of national statistical reports in the US Ingersoll (2001b) noted that although the number of teachers retiring from the profession steadily increased across the 1990s, the number of retirees in any given year was smaller than the number of teachers leaving the profession. This was also confirmed in the OECD (2005) report using evidence from statistical data from member countries. This is suggesting that while retirement is one of the problems, it is not a

prominent factor behind teacher turnover, but keeping teachers in the profession is the major problem. But from another perspective in a more recent report, Harris and Adams (2007), refers to a high turnover among the older teachers mainly due to the fact that these teachers retire considerably earlier than is the case for other professionals. The general view revolving around the problems of the ageing teacher population is the cost implications like teacher compensations at the end of their tenure, and additional resources both to update the skills of remaining teachers and to recruit and train new teachers to replace retirees. However, the other likely implications are reflected in the performance of students.

In developing nations, although there are also concerns about the ageing teacher population, the more apparent issue of teacher shortage revolve around the increase in student population. For example, a number of UNESCO publications make reference to the efforts and challenges of developing countries to reach the Education for All (EFA)¹ and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)², (see for example, Obanya, 2010; UNESCO, 2005, 2011, 2012). As a result many developing nations have seen substantial increase in the number of youths entering the school systems. However, with regards to teachers and teaching, the issues that have been reported in the reports are not only with the shortage in the number of teachers to put in the classrooms, but also the question of the quality of teachers to bring about the expected changes in learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2005, 2012).

In attempts to respond to teacher demand, policymakers in many countries focused on increasing the supply of teachers by introducing a wide range of initiatives to recruit teachers and to entice mid-career people to join the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Some of these initiatives included incentives to encourage professionals into mid-career changes to teaching, lowering standards to fill the increasing numbers of teaching openings, recruitment of teaching candidates from other countries, and providing other incentives like bonuses, housing assistance and student loan forgiveness (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Hirsch, Koppich, & Knapp, 2001; Ingersoll, 2001a; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). A number of other countries, both developed and developing, adopted similar strategies. For example, in the attempt to target teacher shortage in the late 1990's in the UK a large number of supply teachers were recruited along with a number of recruits from other Commonwealth countries

¹ EFA goals were launched in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand during the World Conference on Education for All. The aim was to improve access to primary education and reduce illiteracy.

² MDG was the follow-up action of the EFA. It was established in 2000 during the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal to strengthen the implementation of the EFA goals.

(Dean, 2000; See et al., 2004; Smithers, 2001). In the OECD report of 2011 Schleicher, commented on the success of these campaigns, and this success is also attributed to a strong political drive from the Blair administration. Nevertheless, it is noted in a more recent article published in the Guardian Newspaper (Walker, 2013), that there is a warning of a crisis in teacher numbers across the country. The report was based on data from the National Audit Office, which was communicated by the Education Secretary, Stephen Twigg, thus revealing that the issue of teacher shortage persists.

There have been similar situations in developing nations concerning the different incentives. For example, Chapman (1994) delineated that many developing countries recruited unqualified teachers for the sake of having “a teacher in the classroom, with little regard for a recruit’s initial commitment to teaching” (p.12). The prevailing views are that these alternative recruitment initiatives and other incentives raise doubts about the eventual effect of quality instruction, commitment of teachers and their retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Chapman, 1994; Ingersoll, 2001a; Quartz, Barraza-Lyons, & Thomas, 2005). Therefore, they might not necessarily solve the issues that countries are facing with teacher supply, teacher commitment and quality of students’ performance.

Losses and leaks, particularly in developing countries, are attributed to teachers being recruited to work in more developed countries (International Task Force on Teachers for EFA, 2010; Obanya, 2010). Reasons for teacher shortages are therefore complex and involve many issues, which are sometimes contradictory and embedded in the socio-political context of the country. This implies that the attrition trends also differ between contexts and circumstances as discussed in the section which follows.

Attrition trend

It has been argued that teacher commitment is a key factor in a teachers’ decision to stay or leave the teaching profession (Corbell, Booth & Reiman, 2010; Crosswell, 2006; Day, 2010), and this is closely related to the issue of quality, particularly if the more able teachers are the ones most likely to leave. Understanding attrition trend can highlight potential policy solutions in addressing areas for enhancing commitment and as a result improve quality retention of teachers. Teacher attrition and retention trend vary from country to country and can be very complex. For example, a number of empirical studies have looked at teacher attrition taking into account teachers’ demographic characteristics, ages and experience,

family considerations, subject specialisation, qualifications and the different sector employed in.

In a recent review of 46 studies on attrition and retention conducted in the US, Guarino et al., (2006) asserted the stable finding that attrition is high in the early years of teaching, lower for mid-career teachers and rises as teachers approach retirement, thus representing a U-shape plot of attrition against age and experience. Findings from a number of studies conducted in different countries have indeed demonstrated that a large proportion of new teachers leave within their first few years in the profession (Henry, Bastian & Fortner, 2011; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; OECD, 2005b; Tait, 2008). For example, Tait (2008) noted that the shocking attrition rate among new teachers is a persistent and pervasive problem in many jurisdictions. This statement was based on the predictions which had been made in Ontario, Canada in 2003 by McIntyre, which were that by the second year of teaching about 18% of new Ontario teachers would be at risk of leaving the profession. From another angle, Henry et al., (2011) explored the effectiveness of beginning teachers and found that those who left within the first few years in the profession were less effective than those who stayed on. These two different scenarios in a way illustrate the complexity of attrition and commitment among beginning teachers.

Research shows that attrition rates are higher among secondary teachers than among teachers from the primary sector. For example, data collected from the OECD member countries reported that attrition rates were higher in the secondary sector for seven out of the thirteen countries from which data were available (OECD, 2005b). Attrition rates were higher in the primary sector in two countries, whereas four countries had similar rates for the two sectors. Higher attrition rates are also evident among male teachers in comparison to female, although not in all cases (OECD, 2005b). In the US there is evidence from a more recent longitudinal study conducted by Quartz, Thomas, Anderson, Masyn Lyons and Olsen (2008) that attrition is higher among secondary teachers as compared to primary. The assumption was that higher qualifications among secondary teachers can lead to better opportunities in the labour market.

Attrition rate is also higher among certain subject specialisations. Teachers of Mathematics and Science have often been found to be more vulnerable to leave in comparison to teachers of other subjects (OECD, 2005b, Schleicher, 2011, 2012).

Teacher attrition and retention are also of major concerns for developing nations (Chapman, 1984, 1994a; Obanya, 2010), but trends in developing countries are more varied than in developed nations. For example, a report from a survey conducted by Education International (2007) in six Sub-Saharan countries reported that there was no single reason for attrition in those countries. Attrition through retirement seemed to be high in Kenya, while in Lesotho the main cause was dismissal, and in Uganda the highest attrition rate was for unknown reason. For countries like Zambia death emerged as the main cause of attrition. This report also noted that a common attrition trend in most of these countries to be related to teachers leaving to go and work in other countries (mainly developed countries) with higher salaries and better working conditions. In discussing the root causes of attrition in developing countries Chapman (1994) highlighted economic incentives that could encourage turnover. This was related to the training opportunity that teaching presented, which could provide the skills and qualifications for these people to join the private sector. However, Chapman also pointed to the lack of incentives in teaching itself in terms of low salary, which could result in high attrition rate. Other causes attributed to high teacher attrition were poor working conditions, national efforts or new policies to improve the quality of instruction, the quality and relevance of teacher training and community apathy. There is however, a scarcity of data on issues of teacher attrition and retention in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of how the changes have taken place.

Whatever the causes and the trend of attrition, the common understanding is that teacher attrition is a major concern for both developed and developing countries. The causes and the trend of attrition are rather complex and reflect the socio-economic context and circumstances of that country. The findings which emerge from literature show that keeping good teachers is considered a challenging task and one of paramount importance, particularly now as the inadequate school performance is seen as a consequence of the shortage of qualified teachers. It is also important to understand the links between retention, commitment and teachers' career stage. This is discussed in the section which follows.

Teachers' Career Trajectories

Life cycle research has been a focus for some years and it has also influenced studies of teachers' professional lives. Much of the research work on career trajectories has been categorised under the term 'life cycle' to recognise that teachers have different needs and

levels of commitment and motivation accordingly. Some scholars have determined these categories or stages by years of experience (Day et al., 2007; Hargreaves, 2005; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990), while others have approached it from the perspectives of the age range of teachers (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Nias, 1989; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985). Another group based the organisation of their phases on other issues such as personal and educational factors (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1993), while yet another group focused on a linear progression akin to a continuum (Berliner, 1994; Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000). Thus because there are so many different ways to describe or categorise teachers' career trajectories, it is also a difficulty to generalise (Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). Some of these categories are explored in the next section.

Conceptualisations of teachers' career stages

Sikes et al. (1985) conceptualised teachers' career stages based on the perspective of human life cycle of Levinson and colleagues (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1979) and adult development theories. Grounded in their research of 48 secondary school teachers through their life history, they proposed five phases of teachers' career cycle according to the ages of teachers at entry and exit. The phases they presented were: phase one, 21-28 age group; phase two, 28-33 age group; phase three, 30-40 age group; phase four, 40-50/55 age group, and phase five, 50-55 plus age group. Sikes et al. (1985) argue that even if teachers do not follow the same occupational career paths, evidence from the accounts of the 48 secondary school teachers from their life histories suggests a common developmental sequence of stages. One of the main criticisms of this model is the omission of factors independent of age (Day et al., 2007; Rolls & Plauborg, 2009). Such a view may have been acceptable when people joined teaching straight from school, but more recently the trend has changed and entry to the profession is by people at all age levels. As discussed in the section on motivation to teach, an increasing number of people are entering teaching through a different career path, sometimes as their second or third job. Therefore limiting career trajectories in the manner suggested by Sikes et al., is less convincing.

Among the most comprehensive studies on teachers' career trajectories was the work of Huberman (1989, see also Huberman, 1993) which was a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with 160 middle and high school teachers in Switzerland with the aim of finding out their experiences in their roles as teachers at different stages of their career. Underpinned by both psychological and psycho-sociological theories of the life cycle, Huberman proposed

a series of seven different phases: exploration, stabilization, experimentation and diversification, reassessment, serenity and relational distance, conservatism and complaints, and disengagement. The findings revealed that teachers face a number of problems and crises in their professional lives and the way they respond to these can lead to either growth and development or disengagement. Huberman's work has encountered criticism because of its focus on what happens in the classroom, thus there is little consideration of teachers' roles beyond the classrooms which might influence their commitment at the different stages (Johnson et al., 2004). Nevertheless it remains the main reference in studies of teachers' trajectories.

Another framework of a teacher's career cycle was presented by Fessler and Christensen (1992) which consisted of eight components: pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiastic and growing, career frustration, stable but stagnant, career wind down, and career exit. These categories portrayed the work and lives of teachers as a dynamic process, not a linear progression, and recognised the importance of both personal and environmental factors. Therefore, according to Fessler & Christensen (1992), a teacher may drift up and down from one stage to another depending on the influences of these factors, thus supporting Huberman's theory that a teacher's professional career cycle is not linear.

Taking a somewhat different perspective, Berliner (1994), focuses on differences in experience level particularly the differences between expert and novice teachers. Adopting the heuristic approach of Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), Berliner provided five stages of teacher expertise: novice, advanced beginner, competent teacher, proficient teacher and expert teacher. According to Berliner, expertise is acquired through experience gained and developed at each stage, thus developing new knowledge and adapting to changes that occur. The implication of this is that not every teacher advances beyond the competent and proficient stages to develop into an expert teacher. A similar critique to that of Huberman would apply to Berliner's model, as the personal dimensions are not considered.

A more recent comprehensive study on the work and lives of teachers was the longitudinal project of Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and their Effects on Pupils (VITAE) conducted by Day et al. (2007) in the UK between 2001 and 2005. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods with 300 teachers from 100 different schools in the UK. This study was somewhat different from previous ones, as it incorporated both quantitative

and qualitative methodology using interviews, questionnaires and pupil assessment data, and the range of participants included a cohort of pupils, which had not been the case in previous studies. The main aim of the study was to examine the changes in teacher effectiveness across the teachers' professional lives, which are closely linked to commitment, thus its relevance to my study. Categories proposed by Day et al., (2007) included six life phases based on the number of years of experience in the profession: phase 0-3 years, referred to as commitment, support and challenges; phase 4-7 years, referred to as identity and efficacy in classroom; phase 8-15 years, managing changes in role and identity; phase 16-23 years, work life tensions, challenges to motivation and commitment; phase 24-30 years, challenges to sustaining motivation and phase 31 plus years, sustaining or declining motivation, ability to cope with change and looking to retire (pp. 69-70).

Figure 1 (below) provides an overview of some of the main frameworks of teachers' career stages discussed in this section.

Table 1: Conceptualisations of teachers' career stages

Author	Conceptualisations of teachers' career stages							
	On the basis of age range of teachers							
Sikes (1985)	21-18 age group	28-33 age group	30-40 age group	40-50/55 age group	50/55+			
	Based on experiences in the role of teacher							
Huberman (1989)	Exploration	Stabilization	Experimentation and diversification	Reassessment	Serenity and relational distance	Conservatism and complaints	Disengagement	
	Based on a dynamic process of the work and lives of teachers							
Fessler and Christensen (1992)	Preservice	Induction	Competency building	Enthusiastic and growing	Career frustration	Stable but stagnant	Career wind down	Career exit
	On the basis of development of expertise							
Berliner (1996)	Novice	Advanced beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert			
	Based on years of experience							
Day et al., (2007)	0-3 yrs: commitment, support and challenges	4-7 yrs: Identity and efficacy	8-15 yrs: managing changes in role and identity	16-23 yrs: work life tensions	24-30 yrs: challenges to sustaining motivation	31+ : sustaining or declining motivation		

Although there are some common elements in the professional life phases of teachers among the different perspectives, the differences are somewhat significant. Such diversifications present the difficulty of finding a common categorisation. It also shows that for many people

the different phases do not necessarily follow a linear progression, but rather one that ebbs and flows with the consideration of the changes that are taking place in the different context and personal lives of teachers at a particular point in their career. This adds to the complexity of finding a common framework to understand teachers' professional career phases and the diverse implications for teacher commitment. The sections which follow discuss the different phases from the literature.

Newly Qualified teachers (NQT)

The first few years of teaching are arguably a crucial stage in a teacher's professional growth. As early-career teachers make the transition from pre-service preparation to the reality of the classroom, they encounter new challenges and responsibilities as they try to adjust to the new school culture (Day & Gu, 2010; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Herbert & Worthy, 2001; McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006). Within this broad category it is useful to realise that there are not only those who joined teaching as a first career, but also those who come with experience from other professions. What they have in common is that it is their first appointment in teaching. Therefore, how these teachers are nurtured during these first few years may impact on their commitment to the profession and eventually influence their decision to stay or leave. Studies in education literature of beginning teachers have been more intense than those of other career stages, particularly in view of the noted concern that more teachers during these early years are leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2003). A range of studies refer to the phase in which newly qualified teachers experience their first years in the classroom, although under different headings and at different points (Berliner, 1994; Day et al., 2007; Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1989, 1993; Sikes, 1985). Other studies have focused mainly on this cohort of teachers (Cameron, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; McCormack et al., 2006), while others have tried to compare novice to expert teachers (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

Authors have developed their own preferred sub-groupings for early career teachers. For example, Huberman et al., (1993) referred to the first few years of teaching as the exploration stage which is characterised by a period of survival and discovery. Two sub-groups were identified for this first stage: 'easy beginnings' and 'painful beginnings'. 'Easy beginnings' referred to positive contacts with students, good classroom management and confidence with the subject content and delivery, whereas the 'painful beginnings' were characterised by "exhaustion, over-investment, tensions and the uncertainties from continuous trial and error

in the classroom, difficult pupils and for some isolation from colleagues” (p.35). The ones in the ‘painful beginnings’ would most likely be the ones to struggle later on, and even opt to leave. Based on Levinson et al.’s., theory, Sikes et al., (1985), labelled the first phase as teachers between 21 and 28 years of age, which described those who have not made a conscious decision whether or not to pursue teaching as a career. Similar to Huberman et al.(1993), Sikes et al. (1985), refer to this period as one of exploration, where these new teachers strive to find the balance between handling disciplinary problems and acquiring the adequate teaching repertoire. For Fessler and Christensen (1992), this first phase was referred to as ‘induction’ and it was considered a socialisation process into the school system as these teachers try to find the balance between the theory learnt in pre-service preparation and the realities of the classroom.

The first two stages presented by Berliner (1994) – ‘novice’ and the ‘advanced beginner’, were attributed to early career teachers. ‘Novice’ which is related to the first year in the school, is portrayed as the inflexible time for the new teachers, where they find themselves complying with rules and regulations. Teachers in the ‘advanced beginner’ stage correspond to the second and third year in schools and according to Berliner, they have developed their knowledge base which allow them to recognise the importance of context so that adjustments can be made.

For Day et al.,(2007) the first professional life phase pertained to teachers with 0-3 years of experience and was labelled ‘commitment – support and challenge’. This phase was divided into two sub-groups: developing sense of efficacy and reducing sense of efficacy. The developing sense of efficacy related to those teachers who looked at the difficulties as challenges and felt a sense of satisfaction upon their achievements. On the other hand those with reduced sense of efficacy felt that they were not supported in the school. This supports Huberman et al.’s (1993) position of the ‘easy beginnings’ as opposed to ‘painful beginnings’. These findings point to the importance of workplace cultures and the extent to which their support or lack of it for early career teachers is a contributing reason for career decisions to stay or to leave. Such contrasting findings for beginning teachers also emerged from an early career study in New Zealand (Cameron, 2009). The contrasting beginnings were mainly in terms of those who were supported by the school management, colleagues and community, compared to those with lack of a supportive structure.

Notwithstanding the differences among the stages presented, there is consensus on the importance of adequate support for the NQTs in this crucial process of socialisation, in view of the likely influence on their commitment to the profession and on their future trajectories. For this reason many education systems have incorporated an induction programme to ensure that the kind of support that NQT need is available, thus increasing the likelihood of their retention.

Mid-career teachers

While much research attention has been given to NQTs, the stage of mid-career teachers is one acknowledged as being more complex among all the other stages and has been given relatively less research attention, despite its growing significance with regards to school effectiveness and retention. As noted by Day and Gu (2010), “...the search for fine-grained accounts of their commitment, resilience and well-being during this phase is further complicated by a lack of consensus on the definition of where exactly are the middle points” (p. 84). There has been an attempt in recent years to dedicate more attention to this stage of teachers’ careers, one example being the work of Cameron, Baker and Lovett (2006) focusing on 57 second stage teachers as part of the project of Teachers of Promise.

Despite the complexity of this career stage and the different names ascribed to it, they share some common threads. For example, in the study conducted by Huberman et al., (1993) among the 160 teachers in Switzerland, teachers in their mid-career were considered in the stage of stabilisation, where they consolidate their teaching repertoire, which gives comfort and confidence to the individual teacher. This develops a sense of belonging to a professional learning community and he or she commits himself or herself to teaching. For Huberman et al., (1993) mid-career teachers also face ‘new challenges and new worries’. For some this is a stage of enthusiasm built on the stabilisation phase, while others, particularly those who have not successfully achieved the previous stage, will experience a lowering of energy and interest. Therefore, this phase is also seen as one of transition and crisis. This finding supported previous findings by Sikes et al. (1985), who characterised the mid-career phase as the period which determined whether the teacher stays in teaching or leave. According to them, this decision depended on personal factors, for example, female teachers starting a family. But teachers in this career stage also showed a level of dissatisfaction with salary in order to support the family. Related to this dissatisfaction, was thus a desire for promotion or looking beyond the teaching profession. Within the mid-career period, Sikes et al., also

attribute the stage of 'settling down', which supports Huberman's (1993) notion of stabilisation mentioned earlier.

The mid-career stage is seen as one of competency building, where teachers strive to improve their teaching repertoire. They are receptive to new ideas and learning opportunities, so this period is considered to be one where teachers have challenges, are highly motivated and have more control over events around them (Berliner, 1994; Fessler & Christensen, 1992). From a somewhat different angle, Day et al., (2007) termed the mid-career phase one of 'identity and efficacy in the classroom', characterised by confidence building and effectiveness in the classroom. While this is mostly similar to other models presented above, Day et al.,(2007) indicated three different subgroups for this stage, where the majority showed evidence of growth, another group was only coping, and the third group showed a decline in their sense of efficacy and effectiveness.

The common features of this stage are growing self-confidence and efficacy leading to an increase in commitment to the profession. On the other hand it is also considered a stage of transition and decision making, which determines the future direction of the individual teacher.

Experienced teachers

There are relatively few studies on teachers with advanced tenure in the classroom in comparison to those on beginning teachers. Yet this group of teachers constitutes the majority of the teaching workforce in most countries (Day & Gu, 2009, 2010; Day et al., 2007; OECD, 2005b). The terms 'experienced' and 'veteran' teachers have been used, very often interchangeably, for teachers within this category. The issue of consensus on what constitute the phase that corresponds to experienced teachers is complex. Different terms and boundaries have been ascribed to this group in past studies. For some researchers, teachers in this phase are associated with those who have reached a high level of competency and are still enthusiastic about their roles as teachers, while others contend that it is a phase of stagnation and lowering commitment. For yet another group it is a mixture of both.

Sikes et al. (1985), uses two stages in their framework to characterise experienced teachers: the stage comprising teachers of 40-50/55 years of age and the stage comprising the age range of 50/55 years plus. According to Sikes et al., those teachers in the 40-50/55 years age group could be either successful, in which case they would be in administrative positions and

would be having less contact with classroom teaching, or another group who would find themselves in a stage of re-appraisal and making the decision whether to stay or leave. But common about this stage is that it comes between the previous peak of the career and the pre-retirement stage. This makes it like a 'plateau' in the career of teachers (Sikes, 1985). Thus this justifies the self-reassessment for future decisions. The notion of plateauing has also been advanced by Meister and Ahrens (2011) in their recent study of four veteran teachers, and they confirmed the importance of resistance to plateauing in maintaining teacher commitment and resilience leading to quality retention. The other stage presented by Sikes et al. (1985), corresponding to experienced teachers is that of 50/55 years and over. It is seen as a preparation for retirement stage, where even if teachers experience high morale, their energy and enthusiasm are declining, as their main interest is in their forthcoming retirement. The identification of this group was also evident in the recent study by Hargreaves (2005), where the 14 late-career teachers (with more than 21 years of experience) were identified as those with decreasing energy level and being preoccupied with their impending retirement. This shows that although Sikes et al. are criticised for the age categorisation of teachers' career stage, there is still some likely relevance in the current educational context.

The experienced teachers correspond to four trajectories out of the seven categories of Huberman's framework. These are: re-assessment, serenity and relational distance, 'conservatism and complaints', and finally 'disengagement'. According to Huberman et al., (1993) some teachers at the phase of 'reassessment' can be experiencing stagnation and monotony in their professional tasks. Others are reassessing themselves and these teachers can decide either to leave the profession, or go through a renewal phase. This 're-assessment' stage can share some common features to that of the 40-50/55 age group that Sikes et al., proposed to that of 'plateauing' referred to by Meister and Ahrens (2011). The 'serenity and relational distance phase' denotes teachers who are experiencing loss of energy and enthusiasm, similar to the description provided by Sikes et al.'s group of 50/55 plus. The other two phases presented by Huberman et al., refer to those teachers who resist change and innovation and gradually become disengaged as their focus shifts to that of retirement.

Based on the dynamic framework of Fessler and Christensen, the phases of 'career frustration', 'career stability' and 'career wind-down' apply to the experienced teachers. 'Career frustration' is characterised by a period of burnout, disillusionment with teaching and waning job satisfaction, whereas the stage of career stability refers to a time of stagnation,

which is consistent with the plateauing stage of Sikes et al. (1985) and Meister and Ahrens (2011). This stabilisation period resembles Huberman's stabilisation stage, but which occurred during the mid-career stage, pointing to the complexity of categorisation of teachers within this career stage. However, in view of the dynamic nature of Fessler's framework, people can experience this time of stabilisation earlier in their career. The 'career wind-down' phase, which according to Fessler reflects the stage where teachers are preoccupied with approaching retirement, also shares similarities with previous frameworks, particularly with Huberman's disengagement phase and the 50/55 plus age range of Sikes et al.. The three categories in Fessler et al.'s (1992) framework corresponding to the phase of experienced teachers point towards a downward trend. Even so, as noted earlier, the personal and organisational experiences of teachers at this stage may lead to a phase of induction or enthusiasm and growth, or even exit for that matter.

In Berliner's (1994) framework, the experienced teacher is equivalent to the expert teacher. This characterisation differentiates the expert teachers from other teachers by their ways of thinking and doing things. Henceforth, not all teachers will develop into expert teachers, but this will depend on the extent that they have developed the mastery of skills throughout their careers. Such a view is consistent with other studies focusing on expert teachers (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Hattie, 2002; Steffy et al., 2000; A. B. Tsui, 2009).

Two of the professional life phases presented by Day et al. (Day & Gu, 2009; Day & Gu, 2010; Day et al., 2007) relate to 'veteran teachers, the term which was used to describe teachers with 24-30 years of experience and those with 31 plus years of experience. Teachers in the 24-30 years professional life phase were portrayed as those facing challenges to sustain their commitment to the tasks of teaching. This group of teachers was divided into two sub-groups; one with teachers who have managed to sustain their motivation particularly in relation to promotion in the job, and the other group of those who were losing motivation. The group of 31 and more years of experience was also sub-divided into contrasting sub-groups. The first sub-group is comprised of those who have managed to sustain their commitment despite both personal and organisational difficulties. According to Day et al. (2007) teachers with 31 or more years of teaching experience often struggled with the effects of government policies, bureaucracy and increased paperwork, pupil behaviour, poor health and heavy workloads. Even so, most of these teachers continued "to demonstrate a high level of motivation and commitment" (Day et al., 2007, p. 97). This view has been supported by

the recent study of Meister and Ahrens (2011), whose findings showed that with resilience veteran teachers can resist plateauing and sustain their commitment to the profession. However, it is rather different from the studies of Huberman, where the last phase was mainly characterised by disengagement. The other sub-group consisted of teachers which were categorised as those with ‘declining motivation’, and this was similar to what Huberman et al., (1993) referred to as a ‘disengagement group’, which was also noted in Fessler’s (1992) ‘career wind-down’ group. From another perspective, findings from a study conducted among twenty long-serving teachers in the UK by McIntyre (2010a; 2010b), concluded that the emotional dimensions of the teachers’ work and their emotional attachment to their schools as their work-place were influential in their commitment and their decisions to remain in teaching.

Exit teachers

Within most of the models presented, reference is made to teachers who experience ‘disengagement’ or stagnation which results in resignation from the profession. However, among the frameworks presented only Fessler and Christensen (1992) included the career exit phase, which appertained to teachers who leave the profession for reasons other than retirement. There is no clear path in the life journeys of teachers after they leave the teaching profession as they leave for various reasons, and sometimes it is not so much a matter of leaving the profession, but leaving the organisation of school. Most of the frameworks explored make reference to certain reasons and points in the profession where teachers have a tendency to leave. Having frameworks exploring reasons that teachers exit at the different career points can potentially shed light into what factors influence these teachers’ commitment and their decisions to stay or leave teaching.

What has been drawn from the different studies on teachers’ career trajectories is that, as Hargreaves (2005) contemplated “...teachers are defined, not just by their age or career stage, but also by their generation” (p. 969). When teachers enter the teaching profession, they bring with them their personal beliefs, values and attributes which define them as a person. These, along with their sense of purpose and their social and cultural contexts, are bound to impact on their commitment and career trajectories. Having discussed the different career stages of teachers attention now turns to conceptualisations of teacher commitment.

Contextualising and conceptualising teacher commitment

The emerging view from recent research holds that good teaching is a rather complex undertaking, particularly in the changing nature of societies brought about by globalisation and new developments in technology which are putting more demands on the work of teachers (Crosswell, 2006; Day & Gu, 2010; Hargreaves, 2003). The importance of having committed teachers is accentuated in “...the push for more complex, intellectually demanding approaches to teaching...for effective education” (Firestone & Pennell, 1993, p. 489). This section focuses on the phenomenon of teacher commitment, its conceptualisations and how it has been explored in previous studies.

Teacher commitment has been acknowledged as being complex (Crosswell, 2006; Day et al., 2007; Tyree Jr, 1996) and this complexity is evident through the range of definitions and conceptualisations that have been ascribed to it. There appears to be considerable ambiguity in its theoretical foundations, and this is compounded by a lack of articulation or explanation of the paradigms and orientations that underpin particular research studies. Some studies discuss two main orientations of teacher commitment, sociological which is related to behaviours within schools as social organizations and psychological pertaining to attitudinal factors (Chan et al., 2008; Fresko, 1997; Reyes, 1990; K. T. Tsui & Cheng, 1999). However, there are arguments alluding to the overlap between the two perspectives (see for example, Kanter, 1974; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Tyree Jr, 1996). How teacher commitment has been traditionally viewed is thus discussed under the theme of organisational relationships, covering the overlapping nature of both psychological and sociological perspectives.

Teacher commitment as organisational interests and relationships

Early studies of teacher commitment followed the social exchange tradition rooted in Becker's (1960) theory of 'side-bet'. This perspective derived from the management literature, where the focus was on maximising efficiency and productivity within the organisation. Such studies originated in the US, where the main concerns of the time were retention of workers in organisations and ensuring profits to the organisations. According to this perspective, commitment was viewed as the outcome of the exchange relationship between the employee and the organization. The core understanding was that the more favourable the exchange, the more likely the commitment to the organization. In the application of these ideas in an education context, Alutto, Hrebiniak and Alonso (1973)

developed a scale based on Becker's commitment theory which they used to study teachers' commitment to the school and to the occupation. Altogether 318 school teachers from two school districts in New York participated in the study. In support of Becker's theory, Alutto et al., concluded that teachers' ages, gender, marital status, and years of experience are associated with positive commitment to an organisation. Occupational commitment was high in the early years, lower in mid-career and high in later years. Commitment to organisations was seen as a major predictor of teacher retention. The issue of methodological validity was a main criticism of these studies. However, this conception of occupational commitment and serving of organisational interests became known as 'continuance' by later scholars (Chan et al., 2008; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday et al., 1982; Tyree Jr, 1996) and hence it has widely influenced future orientations of commitment studies.

Still positioned within organisational relationship, another group of researchers conceptualised teacher commitment by focusing on teachers' identification with schools. Educational researchers such as Reyes (1990), Tyree (1996), Tsui and Cheng (1999), and Chan et al. (2008) have defined and conceptualised teacher commitment based on the assumptions that teacher commitment is equivalent to organizational commitment. These conceptualisations have been mainly influenced by organizational theorists like Kanter (1974), Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979), and Meyer and Allen (Meyer & Allen, 1991). For example, for Mowday et al. (1979) organisational commitment is seen as being both behavioural and attitudinal. According to them an employee's retention in the organisation is not only related to economic factors, but also to affective influences, the latter of which might be even stronger factors in organisational commitment than economic factors. They refer to commitment as "...the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation". The claim is that organisational commitment is a combination of three related characteristics which they call *identification*, *involvement* and *loyalty*.

Identification relates to the belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organisation; *involvement* pertains to a strong willingness to put in effort for the organisation, whereas *loyalty* implies the desire to remain with the organisation.

Concomitantly, Reyes (1990) sees teacher commitment as the strength of an individual teacher's identification with and involvement in the school as the organisation. According to him, teacher commitment has three main characteristics, which are a strong belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the school, a willingness to exert considerable effort on

behalf of the school and a strong desire to remain a member of that school as the organisation. Hence, Reyes posited that teacher commitment works to “...activate, direct and sustain behaviour” (p.154), which implies that the teacher’s behaviour is directed towards the accomplishment of the goals of the school. Reyes (1990) acknowledged commitment as complex and proposed a model which encompasses three categories: the personal relating to demographic characteristics of the individuals; the organisational relating to the school environment, social relationships and interactions, along with psychic and external rewards; and the process of socialisation.

In the same vein, Tyree (1996) adapted the conceptualisation of organisational commitment presented by Mowday et al. (1979), thus elucidating that *identification* relates to the degree of support that teachers demonstrate to the goals of the school and the degree to which they associate these goals with their own. According to him, *involvement* is the willingness to go beyond the required tasks of teaching and to dedicate time for participation in school activities, and *loyalty* pertains to teachers’ willingness to maintain membership in the school. Similarly, Tsui and Cheng (1999) defined teacher commitment as “the relative strength of a teacher’s identification with and involvement in a particular school” (p. 253). This supports the view that teacher commitment is often defined and conceptualised in the same way as that of organisational commitment, despite the complexity of teachers’ work (Crosswell, 2006; Day et al., 2007; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Graham, 1996; Reyes, 1990).

Another orientation which conceptualisations of teacher commitment took was from the perspective of socialisation of teachers (Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975; Woods, 1979). Lortie (1975) saw commitment as the willingness of an individual to invest personal resources (e.g. time, money, energy) to the teaching task. For Lortie (1975), commitment was synonymous with ‘involvement’ and ‘engagement’, hence his view relates to an individual’s personal response to the perceived demands of teaching rather than her/his identification with an occupation or its career structure. Lacey (1977), however, posited that commitment was mainly associated with the profession, indicated by the intention of certain student-teachers to make a career in teaching. Woods (1979) identified three forms of commitment among teachers and these were *vocational*, *professional* and *career* commitment. Vocationally committed teachers seek out schools in which their values, especially pedagogic, can be realised. They are committed to education in a wider sense. Professionally committed teachers rate their teaching abilities very high and are committed to their advancement.

Career committed teachers find what is profitable to them and are bound up with their position in the system. The major contribution of this view is the focus on the individual and the rejection of a functionalist view of the work of teachers (Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975; Woods, 1979). These studies go beyond the measurement of teacher commitment using predefined scales by taking a symbolic-interactionist perspective. Nevertheless, the understandings of teacher commitment by these authors are still inclined towards organisational relationships, particularly the investment of personal resources either in teaching as a career or in the teaching tasks.

Paradigm shift

There has been a shift in the way teacher commitment has been conceptualised and studied in the last few decades. Attempts have been made to move away from the organisational interests and to focus rather on experiences of teachers, their identities and the changes that occur during teachers' careers. Thus rather than echoing the organisational theory and studying teacher commitment in order to achieve a sort of formulaic solution, recent studies focus on the person in the profession, which highlights the complexity of teacher commitment and pays attention to a variety of factors relating to teacher commitment.

The critical importance of understanding the personal dispositions of teachers in relation to their commitment has been acknowledged by different scholars (Crosswell, 2006; Day et al., 2007; Hargreaves, 2001; Nias, 1981). Hargreaves (2001), observed that "becoming a tactful, caring, or passionate teacher is treated as largely a matter of personal disposition, moral commitment, or private virtue, rather than of how particular ways of organising teaching shape teachers' emotional experiences" (p. 1057). Different theoretical perspectives have influenced this shift towards a focus on the person in the profession. For example, grounded in a symbolic-interactionist perspective, Nias (1981) conducted a study among ninety three primary teachers in England and concluded that commitment was the investment in a particular career, and was seen as the quality which separates the 'caring' and 'dedicated' from those who put their own comfort first. The study revealed that the teachers were using commitment in four different senses: "as caring, a concern for occupational competence, personal identification as a teacher and career continuance" (p. 182). In another publication referring to the same study, Nias (1989) noted the importance of knowing 'self' as a person in teaching, and she also pointed to the lack of previous research on this notion.

From a study conducted on teacher commitment in Australia, Crosswell (2006) investigated the meanings that teachers ascribed to the concept of commitment. Two dimensions of teacher commitment were identified; the *personal* and the *enactment* dimensions. The *personal* dimension was related to the personal attributes of teachers and had two categories: passion and investment of extra time. The *enactment* dimension included factors related to the teachers 'professional setting' and incorporated categories like a focus on the student, maintaining professional knowledge, transmitting knowledge and values, and engagement with the school community (Crosswell, 2006). These findings particularly elicited the multiple identities that teachers held in relation to their different roles and the conflicting agendas of the daily tasks of teaching.

In the more recent seminal work of teacher effectiveness conducted by Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington and Gu (2007) in England, the complexity of teacher commitment was reiterated. These authors pointed out that teacher commitment cannot be located in one theoretical perspective, but is also found in "psychological, socio-cultural, micro-political, social constructivist or therapeutic" theories (p. 224). Commitment is seen as:

...the passionate determination of one's values, moral purposes and beliefs, where you put your life energy and meaning; and it contributes to the realization of teachers' personal and professional identities (p. 218).

Findings from this study of 300 teachers, showed that initial and long-term commitment of teachers are influenced by personal or life circumstances, along with values or policy contexts and work related context. Participants from their study experienced different levels of commitment at different stages of the profession, which reflected the 'personal', 'professional' and 'situated' circumstances in the individual lives of the teachers.

The new perspectives in studies of teacher commitment that have emerged with the paradigm shift highlight the complexity of the different factors in teachers' personal and professional lives mediated by institutional and systemic factors. These factors are discussed in the sections which follow. The personal dimensions linked to teacher commitment incorporate such concepts like teacher identity, self-efficacy and resilience.

Teacher identity

Teacher identity, that is, the way teachers perceive themselves and how they describe themselves to others has been identified as a key component in teacher commitment (Day,

Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Day et al., 2007; Spillane, 2000; Troman, 2008; van Veen, Slegers, & van de Ven, 2005). Identity is a process which develops over the duration of the teachers' career (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Day et al., 2007; Hargreaves, 2005; Huberman, 1993; Sikes et al., 1985). Conceptions of identity have different theoretical underpinnings; however, in educational research identity has been mainly looked at from the psychological or developmental, socio-cultural and post-structural perspectives. A brief outline of these perspectives is given below as each of these views contributes to the overall understanding of teacher identity in contemporary educational contexts.

The psychological/developmental view focuses on the inner world of the individual (Cooley, 1902; Erikson, 1980; Mead, 1934). In commenting on this theory Day et al., (2006) noted that identity is focused on the position of self as a singular, stable essence that was little affected by context" (p. 602). Beijard, Meijer & Verloop (2004) talk about the traditional view of identity, which is generally seen as "who or what someone is and the various meanings one attaches to themselves or the meanings attributed by others" (p. 750). On the other hand, the socio-cultural perspective builds on the psychological view. It conceptualises identity as both individually and socially constructed, located within and external to the individual, and involves interactions with culture and society (Beijard et al., 2004; Hall, S. 1997; Wenger, 1998). Hence, from the socio-cultural view, identity is an ongoing construction process based on the person's values, attitudes, dispositions and experiences, and it goes through some form of transformation based on social and cultural practices within particular contexts. A more recent orientation of identity is the post-structuralist perspective (Zembylas, 2003a, 2003b), which draws on previous theories but adds the notion of political context, discursive practice and power in the identity formation. Zembylas (2003a) emphasises the role of emotions in the construction of identity which "...opens possibilities for the care and self-knowledge of the teacher and provides space for his/her transformation" (p. 214).

As a result of the VITAE study among 300 teachers in the UK, Day et al.(2007), contended that identity consists of three competing dimensions: "between personal, professional and situational factors" (p. 106).The personal is based on events and factors outside school life which can influence the teacher's sense of identity. The professional identity is influenced by policies and social trends, both on a national and school level. The situational refers to factors arising from the immediate working environment of the teachers, i.e. the school, the department or the classroom. The findings showed that teachers who perceived themselves as

committed were those teachers who had a belief that they could contribute positively to the students' learning and achievements "...through who they are, what they know and how they teach, their beliefs, attitudes, personal and professional values embedded in and expressed through their behaviour in practice settings" (p. 223). Teachers' personal and professional identities can therefore be shaped by school, reform and political contexts (Sachs, 2001; Zembylas, 2003a, 2003b). Using interview data from a study conducted among teachers in Canada, Lasky (2005) found that political and social context played a significant role in shaping the teachers' identity and sense of purpose. The findings which emerged from a more recent study of 37 primary teachers in London, Troman (2008), showed that teachers were undergoing a complex identity development in order to cope with new roles and responsibilities within the socio-cultural and economic challenges, which also impacted on their commitment and their decision to stay or leave teaching.

As asserted by Day (2004) "...a sense of personal and professional, intellectual, social and emotional identity is at the core of being an effective teacher" (p. 54). Therefore, teacher identity is not static, but can fluctuate throughout one's career based on historical, cultural and political factors which can have repercussions on the professional life of the individual, thus showing the close link between teacher identity and teacher commitment.

Teacher efficacy

Teacher efficacy is another component which has been acknowledged as being an essential dimension in relation to discussions of teacher commitment in view of its impact on education outcomes, through the continuing enthusiasm and persistence of teachers in ensuring students' achievement (Coladarci, 1992; Day et al., 2007; Louis, 1998; Rosenholtz, 1989a; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Day et al. (2007) contend that "In order to teach effectively, teachers must not only feel psychologically and emotionally comfortable, they must also have some sense of efficacy. They must feel their professional work is bringing about positive change in their pupils" (p. 35). Similarly, Ware and Kitsantas (2007) emphasise the importance of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as a driving force against low commitment and teacher attrition.

Grounded in Bandura's (1997) social-cognitive theory, self-efficacy refers to an individual's beliefs about her/his capability to carry out a particular course of action successfully. A teacher's efficacy beliefs therefore influence the teacher's behaviour and the efforts that

she/he exerts in the task of teaching, as well as their aspirations for enhanced performance (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). As such self-efficacy is often seen as a future-oriented belief (Bandura, 1997). Accordingly, knowledge, skill and prior attainments are often poor predictors of subsequent attainments because the beliefs that individuals hold about their abilities and about the outcome of their efforts powerfully influence the ways in which they will behave (Pajares, 1996).

Self-efficacy beliefs are also sensitive to contextual factors, such as working environment and career stage, family considerations and motivation, and the levels of self-efficacy may change over the course of a career depending on the context. Teacher efficacy might also be influenced by changes in the nature of the tasks, thus it requires constant reflection and on-going re-assessment of one's abilities for future directions (Smylie, 1990).

A number of studies have shown positive relationships between teacher efficacy beliefs and commitment and the effects on educational outcomes. For example, using the Gibson and Dembo (1984) instrument of teacher efficacy, Coladarci (1992) conducted a study among 364 elementary teachers in the US. The central findings revealed that personal and general efficacy were the two strongest predictors of commitment to teaching.

Similarly, Bogler and Somech's (2004) findings from their study of teachers in Israel showed that self-efficacy was positively related to commitment. Such findings have also been recorded in Chan, Lau, Nie, Lim and Hogan's (2008) research among eighty-one teachers in Singapore. Chan et al. (2008) argued that the connectedness between self-efficacy and commitment allows cross-cultural generalisation. Other studies have shown that teachers with a stronger sense of efficacy outperformed their peers (Moore & Esselman, 1992), and had a more positive impact on students' learning and behaviour (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Teacher efficacy influences how teachers think and react, and having a strong sense of efficacy belief is considered a valuable attribute for teachers in the face of the diverse challenges in contemporary education contexts. Self-efficacy beliefs therefore determines the amount of effort that the individual teacher allocates to particular tasks and to what extent they persevere when confronting adverse situations (Pajares, 1996). Hence, teacher efficacy is closely linked to resilience; the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence and resilience.

Teacher resilience

The importance of the notion of resilience in teachers is evident through the increasing research attention over the last two decades. Grotberg (1997) defines resilience as the “...human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity” (p.13). It has been established that teaching is one of the most stressful jobs, particularly in the current education climate. Throughout their careers teachers are faced with a range of difficulties, conflicts and challenges. Resilience allows teachers to develop the ability to adjust to these diverse situations and persist in their tasks. Resilience is therefore closely linked to commitment and it also influences retention.

In discussing the theoretical foundations of resilience Gu and Day (2007) highlighted two main trends. The first is a psychological perspective which is linked with positive emotions and personal attributes of the individual, thus characterising a resilient person. The other trend is a multi-dimensional, socially constructed orientation which considers the complex nature of resilience “...as a dynamic within a social system of interrelationships” (p. 1305). The nature of resilience has been discussed by a number of researchers and a range of protective factors has been identified which can be located both externally in the social environment and internally as a person’s attributes or qualities (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Oswald, Johnson, & Howard, 2003). In relating this to teacher resilience, factors from the personal, professional and cultural lives of the teachers impact on their capacity to demonstrate resilience and these may vary over the course of their career.

Studies on teacher resilience have taken different foci. A number of studies have explored perceptions of teachers on their resilience. For example, findings from a qualitative study conducted by Stanford (2001) among ten inner-city teachers in the US found that resilient teachers were characterised as having love and commitment to children, personal satisfaction as teachers, optimism and sources of support which ranged from colleagues, family, friends and church groups. Other studies have investigated strategies that teachers use in order to build resilience. The sixteen resilient teachers from Patterson, Collins, and Abbott’s (2004) qualitative study reported that they were guided by a set of core values, they prioritised professional development, they acted as mentors and they maintained their focus on students’ learning (J. H. Patterson et al., 2004). Resilience among beginning teachers has obtained particular attention (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010; Le Cornu, 2009; Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, 2012; Stanford, 2001; Tait, 2008) in attempts to probe into what sustains those

teachers who stay as a large number of teachers abandon the profession in the early years of their career.

As a result of the longitudinal study of 300 teachers in England, Gu and Day (2007) found that teachers' resilience was influenced by their identities and their professional life phases, and identified three scenarios to show the extent to which teachers could balance their personal, situational and professional identities throughout their career.

Resilience is seen as a quality which enables teachers to maintain their commitment to teaching and to the achievements of their students. Therefore, as emphasized by Day and Gu (2010) in the current complexity of the work of teachers, resilience is "a necessary quality for all teachers" (p.156). In general research on teacher resilience has grown and continues to grow as compared to research on teacher commitment itself. This can bring about a potential danger of restricting the field to individual coping strategies while ignoring the role of context which matters in commitment studies. Some of the studies with specific focus on different dimensions of teacher commitment are explored in the following sections.

Commitment to the school

The school organisation as a dimension of teacher commitment has been extensively studied. In view of the way that teacher commitment has been linked to conceptualisations of organisational commitment, a number of studies focused on teachers' commitment to the goals and values of the school as the organisation (Chan et al., 2008; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; K. T. Tsui & Cheng, 1999). Teachers who are committed to the school organisation are those who would be willing to put extra effort into the school and show strong desire to remain in that school (Reyes, 1990). The school environment in which teachers operate and the range of circumstances that teachers encounter in their daily tasks can enhance or diminish the commitment of teachers. Studies of teacher commitment to the school organisation, however, have had different foci. Some focused on the school environment or culture, and investigated teacher commitment through the interactions and relationships within the school and community. Other researchers explored teacher commitment through different aspects of teachers' working conditions within the school and the education system.

Teacher commitment and student-related factors

Students are central to teachers' work, so the teacher's commitment to students has been a core dimension of studies on teacher commitment. Teacher commitment to students includes several aspects, ranging from the notion of personal care to the willingness to help students to take responsibility for their learning. Very often these notions are intertwined and sometimes one can take precedence over the other. According to Firestone and Rosenblum (1988), teacher commitment to students leads to strong emotional bonds with students, and often a personal caring for them (Kushman, 1992). When many teachers share this commitment the result can be a positive climate where students feel comfortable and wanted, although, as noted by Firestone and Rosenblum (1988), there might be no press for high achievement. Findings from several studies on teacher commitment have shown that teachers expressed love and care for students and felt that teacher-pupil relationships were the most important aspect of their job (Joffres & Haughey, 2001; Nias, 1981; Shann, 1998; Troman & Raggl, 2008; Tyree Jr, 1996). Similarly, 'focus on the students' appeared as a significant category in Crosswell's (2006) study.

Teacher commitment has been acknowledged as a significant factor in efforts to improve students' achievements (Kushman, 1992; Park, 2005; Schleicher, 2011). Park (2005) contended that teachers were more highly committed to their students than to their schools or to the profession. Commitment to students learning includes teachers' dedication to helping students learn regardless of their academic difficulties or socio-economic background. Kushman (1992) argued that commitment to students' learning was grounded in the ideas of high teacher efficacy and high expectations of both low and high achieving students. Similarly, teachers who are committed to students' learning are seen as those who show willingness to devote time and effort in ensuring that students will learn (Schleicher, 2011). Using data from the National Education Longitudinal study of 1988, Park (2005) concluded that teachers who were teaching students of higher abilities were more committed to the profession, while those who had students of lower abilities were more committed to the students themselves than to the profession.

Another dimension of teacher commitment is the disruption in schools caused by disorderly pupils, which has been identified as a major hindrance to teacher commitment and students' learning. However, this has had less research attention. In a qualitative study conducted by Blase (1986) among 396 teachers in the US, student discipline emerged as the major source

of stress for teachers. Similar findings were recorded in later research (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Schleicher, 2011), which also found that the lack of consistency by school management in dealing with difficult students added another dimension to the problem. Findings from the longitudinal project (VITAE) conducted in the UK (Day et al., 2007), show that concerns about students behaviour emerged throughout the career stages as a factor contributing to diminishing levels of commitment and effectiveness. It has been acknowledged that student misbehaviour places an additional burden on teachers, hampering their efforts to improve their performance and that of the students because of the amount of time spent in mediating classroom disputes rather than developing their instructional skills (Axup & Gersch, 2008; Blase, 1986; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990; Schleicher, 2011). This has adverse implications for teacher commitment and their sense of efficacy. So studies on teacher commitment to students emerged with different views incorporating a range of other aspects.

School leadership

A number of studies have identified the influential effects of school leadership on teacher commitment. However, these studies have not always been consistent. Some studies take the position that principals' leadership styles have a strong influence on the teachers' willingness to participate and engage in school life (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Kushman, 1992; Veenman, 1984). Within this view, principals are seen to influence commitment to teaching through enhancing the teacher's sense of efficacy (Coladarci, 1992; Pajares, 1996). Ebmeier (2003) noted the role of the principal's support to teaching in building teacher confidence and commitment. In the same vein, Singh and Billingsley (1998) accentuated the principal's influence on the teacher's work experiences through effective "...communication, job design, and autonomy, the provision of learning opportunities and resources and the nature of feedback given to teachers" (p. 229).

Another view which has emerged in a recent study conducted in Canada, Sun (2004), found that school leaders have limited influence on teacher commitment. The extent to which school leaders have any influence on teacher commitment level was largely determined by the perceived alignment between the principal's values framework and that of the teachers. In another context Tsui and Cheng (1999) argued that less experienced teachers are more likely to be sensitive to a school leader's particular management style than are more experienced teachers.

Professional development of teachers

Within the school, another influential antecedent of commitment is professional learning of teachers. The importance of teachers continuously improving their knowledge and skills has been widely discussed in literature (Day, 2004; Nias, 1981). However, varied findings are recorded. Findings from a study conducted by Rosenholtz (1989a) showed that teachers with more professional development opportunities were more committed to their schools.

Supporting these findings, the variable with the strongest relationship to commitment shown in Louis' (1998) study was the ability to develop and use skills related to one's work.

Contrary findings emerged from Park's (2005) study. The teachers in his study who had more opportunities for professional development were less committed to their schools.

Chapter summary

In this chapter the idea of 'teacher commitment' has been problematised. Different ways in which teacher commitment has been explored and understood in literature are described. The assumption is that discussions of teacher commitment is interconnected with the initial motivation to teach, which takes into account issues of recruitment of teachers and the different pathways into the profession.

A range of bodies of research literature have been canvassed. One of these bodies relates to teachers' initial motivation to teach. Teacher commitment has also been researched in relation to its significance for retention of teachers. Trends in retention and attrition of teachers have been explored and the 'push' and 'pull' factors have been identified in previous studies from both developed and developing countries.

The literature review undertaken in this chapter reveals different ways of thinking about and understanding teacher commitment. Research suggests that there are connections between teacher commitment and career trajectories. Teachers' career stages have been conceptualised differently, although there are some common understanding, particularly with regard to beginning teachers. An attempt has been made to identify the stages of beginning teachers, mid-career teachers and experienced teachers in previous studies. The recent seminal work of Day et al. (2007) show that teachers' career stage can influence their professional identity and commitment, and that a teacher's career can fluctuate depending on a range of personal, situated and contextual factors. My thesis builds on Day et al.'s (2007) work, which was

undertaken in a context that reflected the dynamic and unstable dimensions of teachers' work. The context of the two studies (mine and that of Day et al.) differs because Day et al.'s study was conducted in a developed, industrialised country, whereas my study was conducted in the context of a small developing, post-colonial state.

How teacher commitment itself has been conceptualised and studied has also been demonstrated in this chapter. Teacher commitment has been traditionally attributed to organisational relationship therefore has been conceptualised mainly in terms of commitment to the school. There has been a shifting focus in research literature towards understanding teacher commitment as relating to teacher work and teacher identity, away from an organisational focus. This shows a strong connection between teacher commitment and other concepts like identity, self-efficacy and resilience. This chapter also identified some of the main factors influencing the high and low commitment of teachers as have been explored in previous studies. In the next chapter the methodology adopted for this investigation is explained.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This thesis aims to explore teacher commitment in secondary schools in Seychelles from the perspectives of the teachers themselves and other education stakeholders. This aim invites engagement with teachers, school leaders and policy personnel to explore their thinking and understandings of teacher commitment. Participants in the study comprise teachers from the different cohorts, including those still in the profession and those who have left, as well as headteachers and education officials. Since the study relies upon data gathered from participants in a specific educational system and national context, the design was chosen to suit its situated nature. Broadly positioned within an interpretive research paradigm, three approaches were used to frame the research, namely phenomenography, phenomenology and multiple case studies.

This chapter provides a description of and justification for the development of a qualitative methodology for the research. It begins with an exploration of the philosophical foundations and the rationale for phenomenographic, phenomenological and multiple case study approaches, followed by an outline of the data collection and analysis methods. Ethical considerations for this study are discussed and issues related to trustworthiness are highlighted in relation to the qualitative nature of the research and more specific research approaches and methods employed throughout the research process.

Philosophical foundations

At the beginning of any research process the belief system that the researcher holds justifies his/her decision for the positioning of the research methodology and selection of particular methods for data collection and analysis. In identifying the research paradigm, the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the research are revealed. These will vary, depending on the type of study (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mertens, 1998).

Interpretive paradigm

This study is broadly grounded in an interpretive paradigm. Interpretivism is a world view where the individual seeks understanding of the world in which they live and work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Burrell and Morgan, elaborate on this idea when they explain that:

...the interpretive paradigm is informed by a concern to understand the world as it is; to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience. It seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action (cited in Sparkes, 1992, p. 26).

This paradigm is consistent with the research topic, because of the focus on and the interest in the experiences and perceptions of teacher commitment as told by participants at a particular point in time and in a particular context.

As an interpretive researcher I set out to understand the interpretations of the teachers and education stakeholders in my study on teacher commitment. In so doing, theory is developed from the meanings that I gathered from experiences and understandings of the participants in their social context.

A relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology is assumed for the study. Reality is taken to be socially constructed, and knowledge is seen as being context specific and value laden (Anderson, 1989; Bain, 1989). Knowledge, therefore, can be understood as a social reality which only comes to light through individual interpretations, and to reflect different interpretations or understandings (L. Cohen & Manion, 1994; Conrad, Haworth, & Lattuca, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2002). The assumption of a relativist ontology recognises multiple realities (Charmaz, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Knowledge is subjective as it is unique to the participants' backgrounds and the social forces which influence them (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In the context of this study participants are understood to develop subjective meanings for their experiences, which define their realities.

A subjectivist epistemology claims that knowledge is a matter of perspectives, where the researcher and the participants co-create understandings (Charmaz, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The interpretive paradigm in this study is allied with the social constructionist and

social constructivist theories that also underpin the research, as outlined in the following section.

Social constructivism and social constructionism

The study was informed by the theory and ideas of social constructivism and social constructionism. The terms constructivism and constructionism are very often used interchangeably in literature. Both constructivism and constructionism challenge the ideas of an objective and external reality, and position people as active participants in meaning construction and development (Crotty, 1998; Raskin, 2002; R. A. Young & Collin, 2004). There are though, distinctive and subtle differences between the two theoretical standpoints (Burr, 1995; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1985).

Constructivism arose in developmental and cognitive psychology from the works of central figures like Bruner (1990), Piaget (1969), von Glasersfeld (1993) and Vygotsky (1978), with the central idea that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive process. It is usually described as a psychological construct. On the other hand constructionism became prominent from the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), identifying the development of phenomena in social context, therefore having a social rather than an individual focus. In highlighting the differences between constructivism and social constructionism, Young, R. A. and Collin (2004), considered that "...the former focuses on meaning making and the constructing of the social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes while the latter emphasizes that the social and psychological worlds are made real (constructed) through social processes and interaction" (p. 375). In distinguishing the subtle differences between the two constructs Schwandt (2001) posited constructivism as "...a particularly elusive term with different meanings depending on the discourse in which it is used" (p. 30). He further added that constructivism "...focuses more on the individual knower and acts of cognition", while social constructionism "focuses more on social process and interaction" (p. 31).

Concomitantly, Crotty (1998) proposes to reserve the term constructivism for focusing on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind and to use constructionism when focusing on collective generation and transmission of meaning. As the research in this thesis encompasses both meaning-making of the individuals and the collective meaning of the groups of

participants, it will be influenced by a blending of both constructivist and constructionist understandings.

My study acknowledges and draws on social constructivist thinking, particularly in the attention given to the unique cognitive understandings of each participant and the phenomenographic mapping of these collective understandings. The phenomenological approach and analysis adopted in this thesis, which focuses on teachers', school leaders' and policymakers' perceptions of factors influencing teacher commitment reflects social constructivist understandings. However, the research also reflects social constructionist thinking in the exploration of teachers' experiences and the articulation of the collective meanings that are historically and culturally constructed through social processes and participants' interactions with others.

In addition to positing that a phenomenon is socially constructed, social constructionist thinking points to the historical and cultural location of that construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 1995; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1985). For example, as argued by Berger & Luckmann (1966), "...reality is socially constructed and the sociology of knowledge must analyse the process in which this occurs" (p. 13). In practical terms, my study explores how the reality of teacher commitment is socially constructed in the context of secondary schools in Seychelles. Teachers and education stakeholders construct the meaning of their commitment, and the meaning that they make is affected by their historical, cultural, economic and political backgrounds. This further resonates with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) argument that the major focus of social constructionism is to uncover the ways in which individuals participate in the creation of their perceived social reality.

Qualitative methodology

The research questions guiding this study requires an in-depth investigation of secondary teachers' and education stakeholders' perceptions of the phenomenon of teacher commitment, and the factors influencing their levels of commitment at different points in the teaching career and the implications for secondary education in Seychelles. Teacher commitment is considered to be multidimensional and complex. A qualitative methodology has been developed to allow for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of teacher commitment.

A qualitative design was seen to be a good fit for the research questions which seek to explore the professional experiences and perceptions of teachers and other stakeholders on teacher commitment. As Merriam (2002), noted “an interpretive, qualitative approach is adopted when the researcher investigates interactions in the social world to understand the multiple constructions and interpretations of reality at a particular point in time and in a particular context”(p. 4). Merriam (2009) claims that “A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interactions with their social worlds” (p. 22), and this socially constructed meaning constitutes a reality that is not fixed, but is constructed in different ways. Consequently, the qualitative method does not lead to discovery of facts as in quantitative research, but generates understanding of individuals’ experiences in their social context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 1998).

Qualitative design is “based on a recognition of the importance of the subjective, experiential ‘lifeworld’ of human beings” (Burns, 1994, p. 11). In my study the phenomenon of teacher commitment is studied in the natural settings of the participants, where my interest as a qualitative researcher is in how the participants “interpret their experiences...how they construct their worlds... and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). The emphasis is thus to understand how these participants make sense of their professional lives in their specific context by immersing in the naturally occurring social phenomenon and in taking “an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5).

The investigation that is described and reported in this thesis did not only focus on conceptualisations of teacher commitment, but also explored the factors that influence changes in teachers’ commitment at different stages of their career. Qualitative research design has been selected, because it allows the use of a range of interconnected methods in order to obtain a better picture of the issue at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The use of qualitative multi-methodologies also provides an attempt at triangulation and is seen “as a strategy that adds rigour, breadth and depth to any investigation” (Flick, 1992, p. 194). My study adopts a qualitative design incorporating three broad research approaches: phenomenography, phenomenology and multiple case studies. Using and integrating these three different approaches allows for the “...overlapping, but also different facets of the phenomenon, yielding an enriched elaborated understanding of that phenomenon” (Greene,

Caracelli, & Graham, 1989, p. 258). The three approaches are discussed in the sections that follow.

Research approaches

Phenomenography

The choice of phenomenography as a research approach suited this study, because it seeks to identify the different ways the phenomenon of teacher commitment is experienced in a specific context (Bowden, 2000). Phenomenography as a research method has its roots in a set of studies on learning developed in Sweden in the early 1970s (Barnard, McCosker, & Gerber, 1999; Bowden, 2000; Marton, 1981, 1997). Since then phenomenography has developed into a distinctive research approach used not only in research on learning, but extended to a broad range of phenomena in educational research. Phenomenography emerged from an empirical rather than a theoretical or philosophical basis (Åkerlind, 2005). As Marton (1986) noted, "...phenomenography is a research method adapted for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, the world around them" (p. 31).

The assumption underpinning phenomenographic study is that people experience a phenomenon in different ways in different contexts. People's actions are based on their personal interpretations of the phenomenon in question, rather than on objective facts (Bowden, 2000; Marton, 1981, 2000). Phenomenography has been chosen for my study due to the emphasis on revealing the qualitatively different ways in which the phenomenon of teacher commitment is experienced and understood in a specific context, rather than attempting to define the phenomenon itself. The context of secondary schools in Seychelles is taken as a single context in view of the small size of the country (in population and area) and the centralised education system. Even though if the context is taken as a single one, the fact that some of these secondary schools are more remote or smaller than others and that there is different leadership within schools might present some contextual nuances.

In phenomenographic studies the design and collection of data are usually based on a particular group of people and their relation to a phenomenon in a designated context, which in this thesis relate to groups of teachers and education stakeholders in the context of

secondary schools in Seychelles. The study uncovers teachers' perceptions of their commitment and the understandings of education stakeholders of teacher commitment. Analysis is undertaken through comparison of data obtained from the groups of participants in an attempt to describe the experience of the phenomenon of teacher commitment in terms of the essential meaning of the qualitative variations. Phenomenography identifies similarities and differences in the way the phenomenon is experienced. The phenomenographic analysis identifies similarities and differences in the perceptions of the different groups of teachers and education stakeholders on the phenomenon of teacher commitment and tries to illuminate differences in perceptions between the groups (see Chapter Four).

Main features of phenomenography

There are some specific features that characterises phenomenography as a research approach, which help to distinguish it among other qualitative research approaches. Some of these features are conceptions, categories of description, outcome space and structure of awareness. A brief overview of these features is provided in this section.

Conceptions

In phenomenographic research the interest is in seeking the different conceptions of a phenomenon identifiable within the group of participants in a specific context (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997; Svensson, 1997). The nature of conception is central to phenomenography. Marton (1994) described a conception as a way of being aware of something. A conception therefore is seen by Marton, DallÁlba and Beaty (1993) as “a certain delimitation of the phenomenon from the context or background and its component parts and the relations between them” (p. 278). Because a person's conception is reliant upon context, that person's conception is not static, but may change over time as the context changes (Bowden, 2000; Åkerlind, 2005). For example, in my study, while the conceptions are relevant to the participants' experiences in the context of Seychelles at the time of the interviews, these conceptions may vary at different times.

Categories of description

The object of research in phenomenography is the discernment of variation between ways of experiencing, conceptualising, and understanding a phenomenon. This type of study is portrayed as a set of categories of description which represent different ways of experiencing the researched phenomenon. Categories of description are collections of the conceptions that emerge from the data (Svensson, 1997). Therefore conceptions that share similarities in

meaning are grouped together to form categories of description. The categories of description are derived by the researcher after a process of abstraction and reduction of interview data and thus are assumed to represent participants' conceptions of the phenomenon as manifested in the interview data (Svensson, 1997; Uljens, 1996). In addition, categories of description are developed in relation to each other and in relation to the data from which they are derived (Bruce, 1996). Burns (1994) asserted that "For a particular phenomenon, they [the categories of description] are considered to form a set of ordered categories in which logical relations exist between categories" (p. 73). This relationship is further discussed in the section which follows.

The outcome space

Phenomenographic categories of description may be analysed as being logically related to one another, typically in the form of a nested hierarchy or as a branched relationship (Åkerlind, 2005; Marton, 1997; Tan, 2009). The presentation of these logical relations is called the 'outcome space' and it is usually presented diagrammatically. The categories of description within each outcome space represent the variation of the individual's experience of the phenomenon. Such variation may be understood in terms of various dimensions. Hence, it is the dimensions of variations that explain how one category of description precisely differs from the others. The outcome space can thus be considered a representation of the totality of awareness held by participants about a particular phenomenon, which in this study is teacher commitment.

Structure of awareness

The relationship between one category of description and another, and between one category of description and the entire outcome space, may be understood in terms of the structure of awareness (Marton, 2000). The structure of awareness also provides an analytical framework for understanding the structure of the phenomenographic outcomes. It seeks to explain how the structural constitution of ways of experiencing a phenomenon is represented by the dimensions of variation across the outcome space (Åkerlind, Bowden, & Green, 2005). The theory of awareness in phenomenography consists of two different aspects of a person's awareness of the phenomenon that they experience. These are the referential and the structural aspects of awareness. The referential aspect of awareness pertains to the meaning embedded in the person's awareness as they experience the phenomenon, whereas the structural aspect is a way of describing what is in focus in the foreground and in the background of awareness.

Phenomenology

Given the added interest in investigating understandings of teacher commitment based on other education stakeholders' lived experiences, this study can also be seen to draw on a phenomenological tradition. Phenomenology is different to phenomenography, although both are concerned with the exploration of human experience and awareness (Barnard et al., 1999). There has been much debate on the difference between phenomenography and phenomenology (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997; Marton & Booth, 1997) since the inception of phenomenographic research approach. The interest of phenomenologist is 'lived experiences', which is achieved through in-depth description of understandings and experiences (Geertz, 1983; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Van Manen, 1990). Therefore the interest is not only in what people do, but also what they think, believe and value (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The essential task of the phenomenologist then, as suggested by Van Manen (1990), is to capture how people "construct an animating, evocative description of human actions, behaviours, intentions and experiences as we meet them in the life world" (p. 9). Radnor (2001) expressed similar views to that of Van Manen's in his explanation of phenomenology arguing that:

Phenomenologists describe and interpret the phenomena of personal lived experiences, their own and/or other people's. The interest is in contextualised personal individual meanings, with the aim of understanding and recording the meanings which people make of their experiences (p. 8).

In relation to my thesis research, phenomenology corresponds to my intention to obtain rich description on the understandings of teachers and education stakeholders on the factors influencing teacher commitment and their career trajectories.

The intention of this research is to describe the phenomenon of teacher commitment as accurately as possible, with a focus on understanding the essence of the phenomenon. A blending of phenomenographic and phenomenological approaches was deemed worthy to support this intention. Figure 1 below illustrates the similarities and differences between phenomenography and phenomenology.

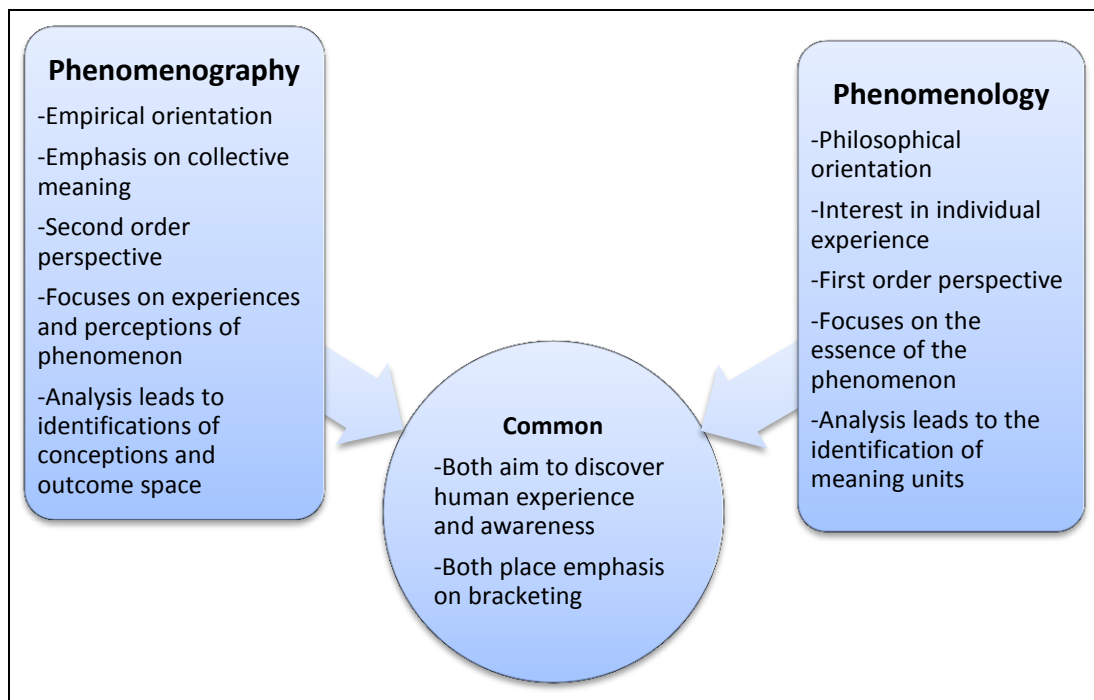


Figure 1: Commonalities and differences between phenomenography and phenomenology

Bracketing is a common feature of both phenomenology and phenomenography. Marton and Booth (1997) acknowledge that phenomenography borrows this process from phenomenology. The process involves the researcher ‘bracketing’ preconceived ideas of the phenomenon to stop them from influencing the raw data (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Marton & Booth, 1997). How bracketing has been used in this study is further elaborated in the analysis section of this chapter.

Phenomenographic research focuses on the experiences and subsequent perceptions of the phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2005; Bowden & Walsh, 2000; Marton, 1981, 1997).

Phenomenography employs an empirical approach to study other people’s perspectives of the world and devise collective categories that describe the variation of this experience (Andretta, 2007; Marton, 1997). So one of the principal differences is that phenomenology is more interested in individual experience, rather than emphasising collective meaning as in phenomenography. Another difference as noted by Marton (1986) is that the essence of phenomenology is a first-order perspective, in which the world is described as it is, but phenomenography is a second-order perspective, where experience remains at the descriptive level of participants’ understanding, and research is presented in a distinctive empirical manner. As Webb (1997), enunciated: “Phenomenographers do not claim to study what is there in the world but they do claim to study what is there in people’s conceptions of the world” (p. 200).

Case study

It was determined that a case study methodology would suit the exploratory nature of a study into perceptions of teacher commitment and the research questions that guide this study. As noted by Gerring (2007), "...case studies enjoy a natural advantage in research of an exploratory nature"(p. 39). Case studies provide a way of understanding and interpreting education processes. They can be used to probe deeply and analyse interactions between factors that explain present status or that influence change (Best & Kahn, 1993; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009), describes a case study as "...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident"(p. 18). These uses of case study are consistent with the intentions of the reported research, where the boundaries of the understandings of teacher commitment are not clearly evident between the cohorts of secondary teachers at different stages of the profession. Conrad et al., (2001) further notes that case study as a method "offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomena" (p. 199), which constitutes another advantage of the use of a case study approach to explore the complex and multidimensional phenomenon of teacher commitment.

There are different forms of case studies and different ways of categorising these. Stake (2006) for example, identifies three different types of case studies, which he differentiates according to the researcher's particular interest. These are intrinsic, instrumental and collective. An intrinsic case is a case of interest in and of itself, and is particularly useful when a researcher has a genuine interest in a particular case. An instrumental case, according to Stake (2006), provides insight into an issue or a phenomenon for better broad understanding of that issue and where generalisations may be extrapolated beyond the case. Collective case studies relate to the use of multiple cases. The instrumental and collective types of case studies have been chosen for this study. Each cohort of teachers is grouped as a case, and each cohort will be instrumental in informing and theorising about teacher commitment. The cases are therefore instrumental in providing data that allow for the emergence and analysis of categories related to the phenomenon of teacher commitment while also recognising the uniqueness of each group.

In addition, a multiple case study framework is adopted for the research. As stated by Chmiliar (2009), "...multiple case design refers to case study research in which several

instrumental bounded cases are selected to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena than a single case provides” (p. 1). In this study a multiple case method allows for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of teacher commitment through the lived experiences of different groups of key participants in the study; that is, secondary teachers at different stages of the profession and those who have left teaching. In multiple case studies “...the individual cases share common characteristics” (Stake, 2006, p. 4), which in the context of my study is the phenomenon of teacher commitment. Multiple case studies can be the basis for significant explanations and generalisations, as examining issues across cases provides a more varied range of circumstances or findings than a single case would. This makes the results more powerful and enhances generalisability. The construction of the cases and selection of participants is explained in the next section.

Methods and Data

This section describes the selection of participants and the construction of the four cases. The specific design decisions about the methods for data collection and data analysis are elaborated.

Selection of participants and structure of cases

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the study. In purposive sampling the researcher intentionally selects the site and the participants according to a known characteristic for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2008; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; May, 2001; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Unlike probability sampling, which is mainly used in quantitative research, qualitative research necessitates sampling with the purpose in mind (Corbin & Straus, 2008; Creswell, 2003; Patton, 1990). Creswell (2003) explains that: “The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual materials) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (p. 185). Using purposive sampling allows a focus on particular characteristics of particular groups of interest, who are likely to provide in-depth data relevant to the research questions. Samples are chosen taking into consideration the parameters of the different groups under study (Silverman, 2005).

In my study, participants include secondary teachers, headteachers and policymakers. The selection of a sample of teachers for each case was based on the specific career stage and with consideration given to gender balance and the variety of subject backgrounds. The

headteachers were selected on a regional basis, with participants coming from different regions, and for variety of experience and gender mix. As for the ministry officials, they were selected in relation to their involvement with the work of teachers.

Focusing further on the secondary teacher participants who are central to the research, these participants comprise four different groups: 1) newly qualified teachers (NQTs), 2) teachers with between five and ten years of experience, 3) teachers with more than eleven years of experience, and 4) teachers who have left the profession. Purposive sampling was used to ensure a broad representation of school areas, gender and subjects. The teachers came from different state secondary schools in the country, including representatives from one island school. Selection of teacher participants was done in collaboration with the Schools Division of the Ministry of Education in Seychelles. I was provided with the list of teachers and their appointment dates from which I made the selection. Expatriate teachers and supply teachers (teachers without teaching qualification) were not selected. Apart from the geographical factors in terms of different school location, there were other factors that were considered in the selection of teacher participants, including their gender, the subject area of specialisation and whether people entered teaching as a first career or as a second career. The intention of the purposive sampling strategy was to ensure that a diverse range of teachers, at different stages in their careers, were included as participants in the study. Also, I wanted to include a group of teachers who had left the profession. I obtained from the Ministry of Education a list of teachers who had left. It was more difficult to select this group of participants because I had to work out from the list the number of years they remained in teaching (this was not explicitly indicated). The intention was to obtain samples of teachers who had left at each of the stages being studied and this was achieved.

The composition of the cases is described below.

Case 1: This comprises five teachers in the first four years of teaching as Newly Qualified Teachers. The group is mainly made up of teachers who have completed their training at the National Institute of Education, or who completed a Bachelor of Education degree in their subjects in an overseas institution. They are teaching a full timetable load as any other experienced teacher. They are all bonded to the Ministry of Education for five years.

Case 2: This is a group of five teachers with between five and ten years of teaching. They all hold a Bachelor of Education qualification in the different subjects of specialisation, or they hold a Diploma of Secondary Education in their respective subject. They were either in their final year of their bond with the Ministry of education, or they have fulfilled their agreement.

Case 3: The group comprises six teachers with more than eleven years of teaching experience. One additional teacher volunteered to participate, resulting in a total of six participants instead of five. They are all qualified teachers although their qualifications range from Teacher's Certificate to Bachelor of Education.

Case 4: This is a group of five teachers who have left the teaching in the state sector at different stages. One of these participants had taken another teaching position in the private sector. These teachers were those who resigned rather than those who took early retirement. Two resigned within their first three years, one after five years and two after more than eleven years of teaching experience in state schools. Like the other groups these participants were all qualified teachers.

The selection of five or six participants for each case allowed me to obtain a more detailed picture of teachers' experiences of their commitment than would have been the case if I had focused on one career stage alone, or had a smaller number and range of participants across the career stages within one case. The selection of a range of participants within the cases helped address the intention of bringing to the fore the subtleties of experience at the different stages of the teaching profession. Also it allowed for more in-depth investigations relating to participants' experiences within particular work settings and different local contexts.

The composition of each case is illustrated in Table 2 (below). The names of the teachers are pseudonyms, to protect their identities. Most of the pseudonyms were selected by the participants themselves. In the event that this was not done, a pseudonym was allocated by the researcher.

Table 2 Composition of each case

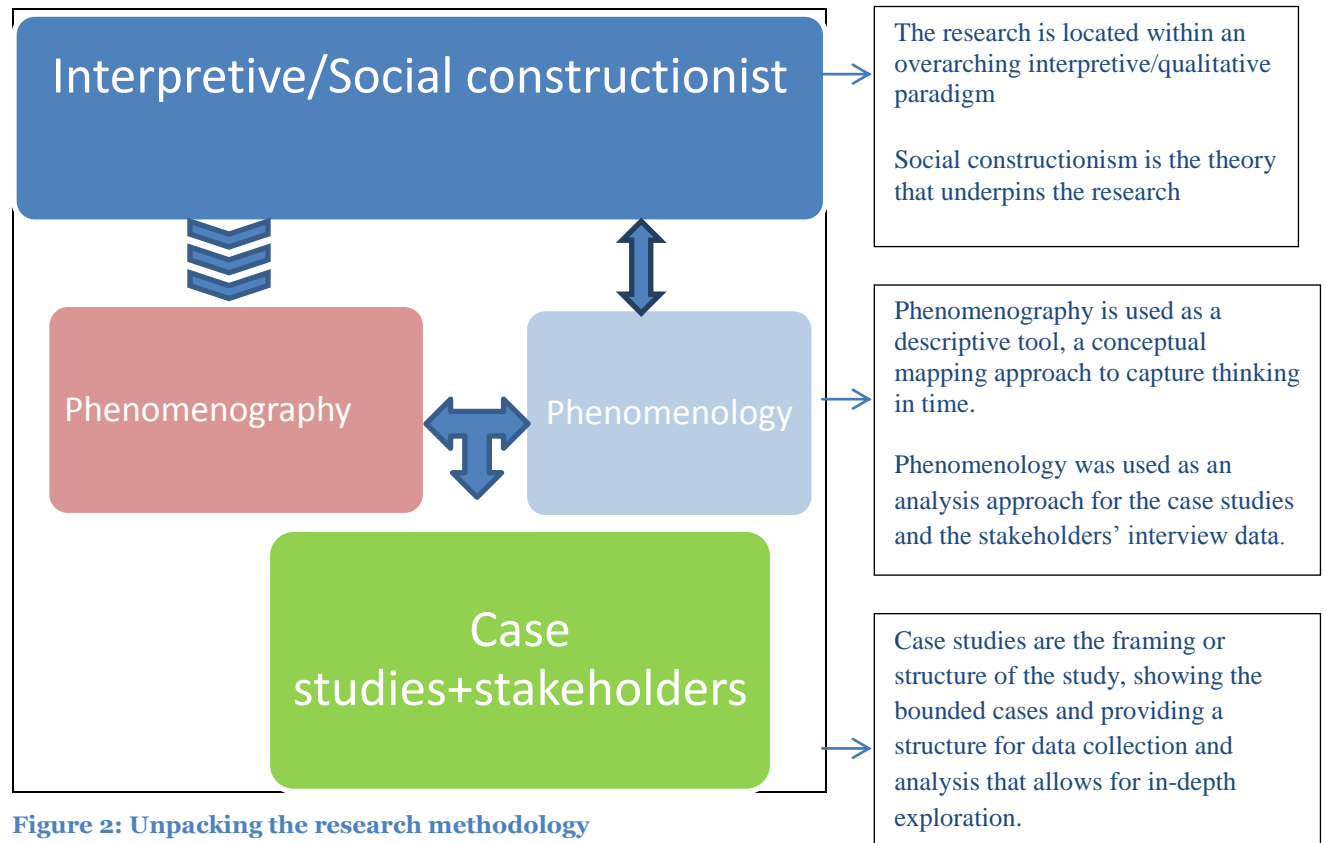
Case	Name/Pseudonym	Subject	Experience
Case 1: Newly qualified teachers (0-5 years of experience)	1. Lise 2. Mandy 3. John 4. Marcus 5. Teddy	1. Science 2. Social Science 3. Mathematics 4. Social Science 5. Technology and Enterprise	1. 9 months (Diploma) 2. 2 nd yr (Diploma) 3. 2 nd yr (Diploma) 4. 2 nd yr (BEd) 5. 9 months (Diploma)
Case 2: Mid-career teachers (6-10 years of experience)	1. Elai 2. Steve 3. Jennifer 4. Elaine 5. Rene	1. Social Science 2. Art 3. ICT 4. English 5. Art	1. 6 th yr (BEd) 2. 6 th yr (BEd) 3. 7 th yr (Diploma) 4. 6 th yr (BEd) 5. 9 th yr (Diploma)
Case 3: Experienced teachers (11+years of experience)	1. Neil 2. Eva 3. Henry 4. Sam 5. Clement 6. May	1. French 2. Science 3. ICT 4. Mathematics 5. Science 6. Personal and Social Education	1. 24years (Licence) 2. 13years (BEd) 3. 20years (BEd) 4. 12 years (BA) 5. 17years (BEd) 6. 21 years (Diploma)
Case 4: Exit teachers	1. Tyler 2. Rana 3. Joel 4. Charles 5. Elvira	1. Science 2. French 3. Science 4. Mathematics 5. English	1. 12years (BEd) 2. 1½ year(Licence) 3. 9months (Diploma) 4. 5years (BEd) 5. 17years (BEd)

In addition to the participating teachers, it was decided to include groups of headteachers and policymakers as research participants and informants in relation to each of the cases. The inclusion of headteachers and policymakers provides another lens to that of the teachers for investigating teacher commitment. It adds to the diversity of the participants, which is encouraged in qualitative research. The sample of headteachers comprised six headteachers selected from the ten secondary schools on a regional basis; one from each of the four regions, one central and one to represent the inner islands. A range of aspects were considered in the selection of the six participating headteachers. This was considered necessary in order to obtain a gender-balanced group with participants of different years of experience and in different sizes of schools. The policymakers consisted of four participants engaged in different policy roles pertaining to the running and organisation of secondary

schools. The titles and descriptions of the roles of these policymakers have been withheld for confidentiality reasons.

The selected participants were approached by telephone or face-to-face to ask them to be part of the study. Most of the invited individuals responded with much interest and enthusiasm. Of those approached, one mid-career teacher did not respond to the invitation and his place was taken by another teacher from the same career stage. While two of the exit teachers responded positively to the invitation to participate in the study, they did not turn up for the interview appointments on two different occasions. One of them was replaced; the other was not replaced because time for data collection was running out and my return to the University of Canterbury in New Zealand was imminent. Therefore, instead of six participants in case four (two to represent exit teachers at each of the three career stages), as originally intended, there were only five participants in this case.

The diagram in Figure 2 below illustrates the complementary use of the different theories, approaches and methods in the research.



The theories, methods and approaches used in the study complement each other so as to provide more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of teacher commitment than would be provided by a single method or approach and to better respond to the research questions.

Interviews

Interviews were the primary data collection method used, to explore the participants' knowledge, interpretations and perceptions of teacher commitment and the implications of those understandings for secondary education in Seychelles. These interviews took the form of semi-structured, direct, individual interviews with participants. The information that was sought from interviews relates directly to personal accounts, experiences, perceptions and actions of participants.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary form of data collection because of their potential to provide in-depth understanding of teachers' and other stakeholders' perceptions of teacher commitment and their lived experiences. Kvale (2007), explains that:

...a semi-structured life-world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived daily world from subjects' own perspectives. This interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the phenomena (pp. 10-11).

The use of semi-structured interviews allows for flexibility and the opportunity to clarify questions and responses with the subjects in order to understand more about the concept being studied than may be possible with a survey (May, 1997; Patton, 1990; Seidman, 1998). Patton (1990) observed that using a semi-structured approach allows important issues or topics to be outlined in advance and following the semi-structured interview format means that data collection is somewhat systematic for each interviewee.

Interviews have been advocated as the primary method of phenomenographic data collection as they can allow participants to provide responses of sufficient depth to support the mapping of understanding of phenomena (Bowden, 2000; Harris, 2008; Marton & Pong, 2005). In the phenomenographic research process the stage of data collection reflects the phenomenographic aim of discovering the different ways in which groups of participants understand a specific aspect of their world. Considering the focus of my study and in keeping with the philosophical assumptions, in-depth interviews as the main mode of data collection

were deemed appropriate in uncovering the different ways that the groups of participants construed their experiences and understandings of the phenomenon of teacher commitment. In relation to the research for this thesis, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed participants to convey meanings of teacher commitment from their own experiences and perspectives in their own words. As the interviews sought to understand meaning from the subjects' lived experience, I as the researcher registered and interpreted the meanings of what was said and how it was said. I was the sole interviewer and interpreter in this study. The focus of attention of the analysis (see Analysis section) was on diversified ways that participants perceive the phenomenon of teacher commitment and on detailed descriptions of the factors that influence commitment of teachers.

Interview guides were used to structure the interviews, while at the same time leaving scope for probing questions and new directions to be taken in response to participants' comments. The questions used related to the main research questions and were open-ended to allow responses with sufficient depth, while also ensuring that they were easy to understand in order to maintain a good conversation flow. Four separate interview guidelines or schedules were constructed for: the teacher cohorts, exit teachers, headteachers and Ministry personnel (see Appendix H for samples of the four interview guides). These guidelines were similar in many respects in order to allow for similar data to be gathered across participants.

Interviews were conducted over a period of seven months from July 2010 to January 2011 in Seychelles. I was allocated an office space at the Ministry headquarters for the duration of the data collection period. There were thirty-one in-depth interviews in total, one with each participant, which lasted between one to two hours in duration. All interviews were audio-recorded.

A pilot phase was included in the study to identify any potential problems with both the interview questions and the use of equipment. As part of the pilot study six interviews were conducted with three teachers, two headteachers and one policymaker who were not participants in the study. These pilot interviews provided valuable insights in preparing for the initial interviews. One insight pertained to the interview questions. Some adjustments to the interview schedule were required in order to put the participants more at ease and allow for a better conversation flow. Some further questions were also added in order to obtain more in-depth information on the complexity of the phenomenon of teacher commitment. The pilot phase also proved important when it came to the practicality of using technological

equipment to record the interviews. I had to repeat the first pilot interview with one teacher due to a misuse of the equipment. This equipment misuse was rectified in the other interviews which followed. As a precaution, for the subsequent interviews a back-up recorder was available along with supplementary batteries to cater for any eventualities.

Timing and location of interviews were negotiated with participants and I had to accommodate the participants' preferences. For teacher participants and school headteachers, most interviews were conducted on the school premises, with the exception of two teachers and one headteacher who opted to come to the Ministry headquarters. The policymakers invited me to their respective offices for the interview and these interviews were conducted after working hours in view of their tight schedules. The secondary schools where the participants were based were spread out over two islands. Because of the nature of school life, on a number of instances after reaching the school I found that the interview had to be postponed in view of some unforeseen activities or meetings at the school. Participants used English for the interviews with the exception of two teachers who opted to speak in Creole. Their interviews were translated by me and the English translation of the transcriptions was sent back to the participants for their approval of the content. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The transcribed interviews in all cases were sent back to the participants for their verification and comments.

Reflective journal

A reflective journal is another data tool that was used in the research process. The use of a reflective journal helped me to focus on the researcher's role in the inquiry, in acknowledgement of the social constructionist positioning that understandings are co-constructed, and was helpful for managing multiple perspectives. It was also a means of enhancing ethical and methodological rigour (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Entries in the reflective journal were made immediately after all the interviews to allow the recording of body language or non-verbal expressions or signals while the memory was still fresh. Also social interactions and dynamics were described that would help to make sense of what was being said and assist with the interpretation of the transcription texts. A sample from the reflective journal can be found in Appendix L.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in most qualitative research begins with data collection and remains constant in the research process rather than confined to the end of data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ezzy, 2002; Mason, 2002). The forms of analysis adopted in this study were directed by the research questions and the selected research approaches. The analysis processes fall under a qualitative umbrella and are closely connected.

Phenomenographic analysis

Over the years phenomenographers have developed general principles for the process of phenomenographic data analysis (see for example, Åkerlind, 2005; Dall'Alba, 2000; Marton, 1986; Marton & Booth, 1997). These general principles consist of four phases:

- Immersing into the transcripts looking for meaning
- Discovering and constructing categories of description
- Developing the structure of awareness
- Developing the outcome space

Within these phases of phenomenographic analysis, the reiterative nature of phenomenography requires the researcher to re-visit the transcripts throughout the phases to allow the sorting and resorting of results. Through this iterative process the researcher uncovers the range of conceptions in the data. In relation to this particular study, I concentrated in the phenomenographic analysis on searching for the qualitatively different ways of experiencing and conceptualising the phenomenon of teacher commitment.

During the first phase of the process of data analysis I familiarised myself with the interview transcripts through reading and re-reading to look for variations in meaning across interview transcripts. The interview transcripts were read in their entirety. Key utterances relevant to the phenomenon of teacher commitment were selected from the transcripts and coded. Coding for Kerlinger is seen as the “translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis” (cited in L. Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 286). These selected utterances or conceptions formed the pool of meaning based on their relevance to the phenomenon, because in phenomenographic analysis the assumption is that there is a limited number of qualitatively different ways in which a group of participants conceptualise a phenomenon (Marton, 1986). Thus the excerpts that are selected illustrate the different conceptions of the phenomenon of teacher commitment as described by participants.

In the next stage of the analysis the conceptions from the pool of meaning were grouped together based on their similarities. I analysed the utterances to find their relevance to the phenomenon and their differences with each other. The conceptions with common meaning were organised in preliminary categories of descriptions. I continually returned to the transcripts so as to maintain faithfulness to the participants' experiences and perceptions of teacher commitment. The names of the categories of description were adjusted in an iterative process. In my study the conceptions of teacher commitment were first organised into seven categories of description. These categories were refined through continuous sorting of data and the reiterative process until a final set of four categories of descriptions was established (see chapter four). The challenges of phenomenographic coding and samples of the process can be seen in Appendix M.

In the process of constructing the categories of description, the different variations of awareness of the phenomenon were identified. By reading and re-reading the transcripts I was able to discern the different statements that were relevant to the particular category of description. These variations formed the referential and structural aspects of each category of description. The referential aspects refer to the global meaning of the category of description. The structural aspects delimited the different conceptions related to the referential aspect of the respective category of description (Marton, 2000). Åkerlind (2005), indicated that the features of the structure of participants' awareness are empirically derived from the interview data. Thus, each structural aspect for the four categories of description was supported by excerpts from the interview data.

The final phase of the phenomenographic analysis was that of developing the outcome space. The assumption of phenomenography is that the categories of description are related to each other as they come from the same set of data in relation to the same phenomenon. The relationships between the categories of description and the structure of awareness form the outcome space of the phenomenon of teacher commitment. Thus the outcome space presents a structural framework of the categories of description, which reveal the complexity of the phenomenon. For some phenomenographers this relationship may indicate a hierarchy of categories (Marton, 1997; Walsh, 2000), however, for others the relationship may take the form of branching structures (Åkerlind, 2005; Pramling, 1995). In my study the relationship took the latter structure and the outcome space is presented in a circular model in Chapter Four (see Figure 8).

Phenomenological analysis

The second stage and form of analysis process was a phenomenological analysis relating to the case studies. Analysis of case study data is rather complex as the researcher has to handle a large amount of data (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Both Yin (2008) and Patton (2002) point to the importance of organising case study data into a ‘comprehensive resource package’ or a ‘case study database’ to make data easily retrievable for the report writing. Merriam (2009), suggests two stages of multi-case analysis; the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis” (p. 204).

As in most qualitative studies, the analysis of the case studies in this thesis started with the process of data reduction as specified by Miles and Huberman (1994). The interview transcripts in this study were coded to reveal the teachers’ perceived levels of commitment, the factors that influenced their decisions to join teaching, the factors that are influencing their levels of commitment at the different stages of their career and their intentions in terms of career plans and trajectories. Through the phenomenological analysis processes, the coded data were interpreted to reveal the lived experienced as constructed by participants. Similar to phenomenographic analysis of data, in a phenomenological inquiry the analysis attends to searching for structure of experiences or understanding of the phenomenon. There are similarities therefore in the actual process and analysis; however, there are differences in the way the findings are reported. Similar to phenomenography, the emphasis of phenomenological analysis is in the process of familiarisation with the data. In this study this was achieved through listening repeatedly to the interview recordings and noting the different units of meaning. This process is also a way of applying bracketing as far as possible; the suspension of the researchers’ own presuppositions and giving careful attention to the meanings inscribed by the participants (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

In the familiarisation process of phenomenological analysis the different units of meaning are delineated. Similar to phenomenography, this is considered by some, including Hycner (1999), to be a critical stage in the analysis, where the statements that are seen to illuminate the aspect of the phenomenon being researched are extracted. Through reading and re-reading of interview transcripts these different units of meaning are rigorously examined in order to elicit the essence of the meaning. Then the researcher looks for common units of meanings which are then clustered together to form themes. As Hycner (1999) noted, the researcher “looks for themes common to most or all of the interviews as well as the individual

variations” (p. 154). This was particularly relevant for my study where the phenomenological component focused on perceptions of teachers across the cases, as well as school leaders and policymakers.

In phenomenological analysis, the researcher concludes the process by writing the amalgamated summary, which reflect the context, or ‘horizon’ from which the themes emerged (Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher at this point, as succinctly suggested by Sadala and Adorno (2002), “transforms participants everyday expressions into expressions to the scientific discourse supporting the research” (p. 289). In my research, this process generated summaries of factors influencing teacher commitment across career stages.

In summary, the analytical approaches used in this thesis fall under the qualitative umbrella and are consistent with the interpretive and social constructionist and social constructivist theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. The researcher gets close to the participants’ lived experiences in order to gain an insider’s perspective’ (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The analysis was aimed at exploring how participants make sense of their experiences and their perceptions and understandings of teacher commitment. The themes that emerged are complex and intertwined, and reflect the particular political, social, historical, cultural and personal contexts of the participants. Findings for each case were presented and comparison across the cases was done as findings for other cases were presented (see chapter five).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are concerned with what is right or just, in the interests of not only the researcher, but also others who are the participants in the research (May, 1997). Ethical concerns in educational research can be complex and researchers should make ethics their primary consideration throughout the research process (L. Cohen & Manion, 1994; Creswell, 2008; Huberman & Miles, 2002; Patton, 2002). With regards to this study the ethical clearance procedures were met as outlined in the requirements of the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) of Canterbury University. A formal application was submitted and approval was given for data collection (Appendix I for Ethical approval). The study had to comply with the principles established by the ERHEC, which include voluntary participation of participants in the study, the provision of clear information to all participants, the necessity to justify any change that may occur during the period of study, confidentiality

of information provided by participants and anonymity (University of Canterbury, 2009). How these principles were dealt with in this study is further outlined below.

It is noted that social research requires the consent and cooperation of participants; the people who are asked to participate in a study have the right to know what they are getting into and the right to give or withhold their cooperation on the basis of that information. Formal procedures to obtain informed consent ensured that the participating teachers, headteachers and Ministry officials were all fully informed about the research process and the nature of their voluntary participation, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or favour. In addition, a formal letter was sent to the Ministry of Education of Seychelles seeking permission to conduct the research in state schools in Seychelles and to have education staff as participants (refer to Appendix J).

A particular ethical challenge was the negotiation of power relations, between myself as the researcher and participants, and between participants. Within a positivist world view the role of the researcher is prominent as “he alone contributes to the thinking that goes into the project” (Reason, 1994). The researcher is thus seen as a neutral observer who objectively investigates the different human phenomena. The division of the roles between the researcher and the participants are predetermined, dichotomous and unequivocal. But within an interpretive paradigm research is mostly seen as a research-participant coproduction of knowledge. As noted by Gergen and Gergen (2000), “the division between researcher and subject is blurred, and control over representation is increasingly shared” (p. 1035). Qualitative research therefore fosters a rebalancing of power in the researcher-participants relationship (O’Connor and O’Neil, 2004). Both the researcher and the participants feel involved, because participants are revealing their personal experiences and the researcher is studying these experiences in-depth and aspiring to understand them and doing them justice in communicating the findings.

In my study a number of measures were taken in dealing with power relations. At the start of the project the goals were clearly outlined. Furthermore, my personal commitment to teachers, the population studied, was made known. The roles and rights of the participants were made explicit through the information letter and the consent form.

During data collection participants were re-apprised of ethical matters relating to their participation in the study, particularly in relation to their voluntary participation and confidentiality arrangements. Prior to all interviews I started an informal conversation with the participants to put them at ease. The participants chose the interview location and the language that they wanted the interview to be conducted in. I encouraged all participants to express themselves freely on the topic of the research and their experiences in the profession.

At the start of data analysis the transcribed interviews were sent back to participants for their comments and to seek agreement on the way their ideas were expressed. In the analysis of data, bracketing was used as much as possible so as not to impose my own assumptions of the phenomenon. Also, excerpts from the interviews have been used to illustrate points made in the reporting of findings, to allow the reader to see the extent to which the analysis and reporting remains close and true to the ideas expressed by participants in the data. These analytical strategies are in line with both phenomenographic and phenomenological research approaches. Also, in the reporting of the findings in this thesis, pseudonyms have been used to protect the participants' identities.

These measures together helped in maintaining safety of participants and addressing researcher-participant power relations. However, it also needs to be acknowledged that my roles as a researcher and as a government official were inescapable and meant that the researcher-participants power relations in my research are inevitably unequal, even though a range of strategies were used to minimise the inequality. In qualitative research, power relations are acknowledged and interrogated, not to deny these relations but to help address these and minimise the potential negative effects of unrecognised power relationships and interactions. The strategies described are those actions taken by me to acknowledge and address power relations in my study. However, as in any qualitative study I recognise the challenge of power relations in my study. This was sensitive not only for the participants but also for the researcher. One excerpt from the reflective journal is given (see below) as an illustration of this challenge. This excerpt shows that sometimes power relations in qualitative research can limit the amount of information that the researcher can get from participants – in this case I, the researcher, acted not to probe deeper in conscious recognition that to do so might be discomforting for the participant.

Journal entry

Marcus was one of my students at the National Institute of Education (NIE) and I remember him as the most committed of all the students from his group. He was often chosen to give careers talks to secondary school students to encourage them to take up teaching as a profession. I was really surprised to hear what he had to say today about teaching. He must think that I feel disappointed with his answers; because he said “I know you wouldn’t like to hear this from me”. I could not probe any further in case he feels that I am putting him under pressure as his past lecturer.

(Reflective journal entry, 21st September 2010)

This shows that power relations influence the nature of the data and the process of data collection, despite efforts to alleviate these influences.

Anonymity and confidentiality are also important factors to consider in research and the researcher has the obligation to protect the anonymity of participants and keep research data confidential (L. Cohen & Manion, 1994; Creswell, 2008; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Participants were informed of procedures to be used to protect their anonymity in the research process and in the publication of findings. This was done through the information letter to the participants and the consent forms (refer to Appendix K for a sample of information letters and consent form). However, in small countries such as Seychelles, people or institutions may be identifiable by their place of work, positions held and by association with others. In such situations anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed, despite best intentions and actions to protect participants’ privacy and identities. In particular, in Seychelles officials may be identifiable by their position, because there are only a small number of education officials. This issue was firstly addressed in the ethics applications and measures were employed to maintain as far as was possible and reasonable the anonymity of participants and helped to maintain their safety. Measures taken to maintain anonymity included replacing participants’ names with pseudonyms and withholding names of schools in which participants worked in the reporting of findings. The ages of the participants have also not been reported in this thesis, or any other biographical details that might clearly identify the participants. In relation to the confidentiality and security of data, confidentiality was maintained by having one person, the researcher, do the interview transcribing and translations. All copies of interview transcripts were kept secure and accessible only to the researcher and thesis supervisors.

Furthermore, in qualitative research it is important to maintain trust and respect between the researcher and participants in order to ensure the experiences of the research are positive for

all concerned and to ensure trustworthiness of the data. To foster both of these qualities, the participants were given the opportunity to read the transcribed interviews and provide comments and explanations in order to clarify the meaning of interview texts. This, along with the use of triangulation strategies, helped ensure the validity and credibility of findings, by reducing the likelihood of misreading of the data and misinterpretations and mistrust between the researcher and participants.

Trustworthiness of the research

Data in qualitative studies are recorded in terms of narrative descriptions, not numbers as would be the case in quantitative studies. Due to the interpretive and narrative nature of qualitative research, measures of validity, reliability and generalisability that are used to evaluate quantitative research rigour (Burns, 1994; Kvale, 1996) may not be appropriately applied to qualitative studies (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The concept of trustworthiness has been developed and adopted as a way of discussing the value and rigour of research that has an interpretive epistemology (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Collier-Reed, Ingerman, & Berglund, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue for such constructs such as ‘credibility’, ‘transferability’, ‘dependability’ and ‘confirmability’ to be used as indicators to confirm trustworthiness of qualitative research. The trustworthiness of qualitative research relates to the whole research process, starting with ensuring clearly written research questions and selecting the appropriate research method. I outline below the processes that have been considered in this study to ensure trustworthiness of the research.

Credibility

Credibility is what has been traditionally referred to as internal validity. According to (Crotty, 1998), the credibility of the research is found in the processes used to carry out the inquiry. Supporting credibility in this study, the interview transcripts were sent back to participants for member checking, thus ensuring truthfulness of the data. Findings presented were supported by evidence from the interviews, in the form of detailed and illustrative quotations, confirming the groundedness of the data and truthfulness of findings drawn from the data.

Another strategy used in qualitative research in order to ensure credibility is that of reflexivity (Koch & Harrington, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Wall, 2004). Reflexivity takes into account the potential biases of the researcher. In this study my position as an educational

professional grounded in the historical and cultural contexts of Seychelles education was established. The process of identifying my position helps to recognise possible assumptions and judgements that I might make. In addition the process of bracketing in both phenomenography and phenomenology helps to maintain focus on the understandings of the participants rather than what the researcher might want to find.

Triangulation is also considered an important element in the establishment of research credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin, 1978). Triangulation has been defined by Flick (2009) as the “different perspectives on an issue under study” (p. 445). If in quantitative studies triangulation is mainly used for validation or verification, in qualitative studies it is generally used to ensure a rich and robust account (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999).

Triangulation thus serves to clarify meanings through the different ways in which the different groups of participants perceive phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Seidman, 1998; Silverman, 1993; Yin, 2009). Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) identify four different types of triangulation: data triangulation relating to the use of different sources of data, methodological triangulation relating to the use of different methods of data collection, investigator triangulation relating to having more than one researcher involved in the study, and theory triangulation relating to the use of multiple theories or perspectives to analyse data. Two of the four types of triangulation have been applied in this study: data triangulation and methodological triangulation. In applying data triangulation, information was obtained from teachers, school leaders and policy personnel. The application of methodological triangulation was achieved through adoption of three research approaches, phenomenography, phenomenology and multiple case studies. Cross-case analysis was another means of triangulation that was used, helping to increase the credibility of the research findings.

Transferability

Transferability relates to the extent to which the findings of the research are applicable to other settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This concept is used in qualitative research instead of the notions of generalisability and predictability that are common in quantitative research. The question of generalisability in qualitative studies has been an issue of contention over the years, (see for example, Gibbs, 2007; Greene and Caracelli, 1997; Larsson, 2009), because the essence of qualitative research rests in its focus on description based on participants’ reality in a specific context. Marton and Booth (1997) in addressing generalisability in

phenomenographic research indicate that awareness of people is continually changing as their experiences are influenced by the changes taking place around them. However, Marton (1986) suggested that “once the categories of description have been found, it must be possible to reach a high degree of inter-subjective agreement concerning their presence or absence if other researchers are able to use them” (p. 35). Adding to this discussion, Patton (2002) contends that even though qualitative findings cannot be generalised they can be extrapolated. In this thesis the detail and transparency of the process of data collection and analysis assist in the methodology being able to be transferred and employed in other research settings. Also, although the findings relate to a particular context, broad themes and understandings that are reported in this thesis may be seen by readers to be relevant to other similar educational contexts. How the methodology and findings may be transferred is a matter for readers to decide.

Dependability

Dependability underpins ideas of consistency in research findings (Guba, 1981). The notion involves the question of whether the findings would be consistent if the same study was to be replicated (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991). This does not mean that findings will be the same because the contextual factors are different and real-life setting cannot be controlled. Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) argue that dependability is employed to “attest to the quality and appropriateness of the inquiry process” (p. 107). In providing a detailed description of the methodology of the research in this chapter, that focuses on the alignment between the theoretical foundations, research approaches, and the data collection and analysis methods, action has been taken to ensure dependability.

Confirmability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) confirmability relates to concerns about the extent to which the findings reflect the experiences and ideas of participants. Aspects of confirmability are closely linked to those of credibility. For example, Miles and Huberman (1994) consider a key criterion of confirmability to be the extent to which the researcher admits his/her predispositions. Both reflexivity and triangulation methods are ways that help ensure confirmability in qualitative research. My pre-dispositions in this study have been addressed through the acknowledgement of my position as a researcher at the start of the research process. Triangulation through multiple informants and multiple approaches was another way of ensuring confirmability as it was a means of reducing researcher bias. As outlined earlier

in this chapter, the triangulation of sources was the main type of triangulation used in my study. This is a way of comparing data for consistency that involves the use of different data sources within the same method (Patton, 2001). I also used methods triangulation. Although the study was qualitative, different approaches to data organisation and analysis were used, including phenomenography, phenomenology and case studies. Patton (2001) suggests that both methods triangulation and triangulation of data sources may not lead to a single consistent picture. The important thing is to study and understand when and why there are differences. This is what has been attempted in my study and has been reported in the findings chapters (Chapters Four to Six). .

Study limits

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of teachers and other education stakeholders on teacher commitment. The exploratory nature of the investigation, the distance (the complexities of collecting data in Seychelles, due to physical distances and a need for me to travel to Seychelles from New Zealand and to travel around Seychelles for the interviews) and the timeframe provide limits to the scope of this study. The research can be seen as a ‘snapshot in time’, capturing factors that influence teacher commitment in the particular context of case studies. It provides an in-depth exploration of these factors in time and place rather than a longitudinal study over time.

A limitation of the proposed multiple case study research lies in the fact that it involves a limited number of cases. This has implications relating to generalisability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 2006; Yin, 1994, 2009). The findings cannot be generalised across the Seychelles secondary teacher population or broader populations as the cases may not be representative of these general populations. However, these levels of generalisation and prediction are not the intention of this study. Rich description and explanation are the goals, and these can be achieved through focused, situated research using a multiple case study approach.

Interviews were the main method of data collection. The use of individual interviews as a data collection tool has some limitations. Individual interviews can be time consuming for both parties (Anderson, 1989) and can generate large amounts of data. This has implications for the time spent in transcribing. Furthermore, analysing interview data can also be very

complex and time-consuming. This was the case in this study, where a large amount of interview data was generated that had to be processed and analysed by a sole researcher. Also, using qualitative interviews implies the heavy reliance on descriptive information provided by the participants, and this leaves room for important details to be left out – either because questions that would elicit this information are not asked or because participants choose not to share this information. In qualitative interviews the participants can choose what to tell and what not to tell, meaning that in interview-based research you get the ‘truth’ that the participants are willing to share in that particular interview context. As for the researcher, the issue of what to report from the vast amount of information can be considered a challenge, as some of the valuable information might be omitted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). On the other hand, the supply of rich and detailed data is strength of qualitative research. The dilemma of what to leave in or leave out is a feature of qualitative research where a researcher is trying to ‘get inside the head of the participants’. The information shared and the findings reported will inevitably be partial and selective. However, they can also be rich and detailed. In this thesis, then, I as the researcher can be understood to be providing a particular and partial account, based on the views the participants have been willing to share, which are interpreted and synthesised by me.

Chapter summary

In this chapter the research methodology selected for this study has been described. This includes the identification of the social constructivist and social constructionist philosophical foundations for the research, the rationale for the adoption of a qualitative methodology and particular research approaches. A case has been made for the use of phenomenography, phenomenology and multiple case study approaches as ways of exploring participants’ experiences and understandings of the phenomenon of teacher commitment. Specific design decisions and features relating to participant selection and data collection and analysis methods have also been described. Ethical issues, questions of trustworthiness and the strengths and limitations of the research methodology as they apply in the particular context of Seychelles have been explored.

The next three chapters report the findings from the analytical processes that are described in this methodology chapter. The first of these, Chapter Four presents the phenomenographic analysis and findings.

Chapter Four: Understandings of teacher commitment

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings for the first of the research sub-questions of this study: What are the perceptions of teacher commitment among teachers and other education stakeholders? As explained in Chapter Three, a phenomenographic approach underpins the data analysis for this first research question. The strength of the phenomenographic approach in this study is its capacity to highlight variations in the participants' ways of experiencing and understanding the phenomenon of teacher commitment in the context of secondary schools in Seychelles. Phenomenographic analysis is a two way process of discovery and construction. It is a process of discovery because conceptions emerge from the transcripts letting the data tell the story, and a process of construction because of an iterative interaction with the transcripts which helps to enhance the accuracy of the interpretations made (Åkerlind, 2005; Bowden, 2000; Marton, 1997).

The chapter consists of four different sections. It starts with a brief restatement of the application of phenomenography and the steps taken in the analysis of data for this first research sub-question. The second section of the chapter presents the main findings through four categories of description pertaining to the teachers and education stakeholders' conceptions of teacher commitment. The third section offers an illustration of how the four categories are distributed among the different groups of participants. This is presented to show variations in the similarities and differences in perceptions of teacher commitment between the teacher cases and the education stakeholders. The organisation of the categories of description into an 'outcome space' is explained in the final section, highlighting the relationships between the different categories. This has potential to provide a detailed understanding, supported by systematic analysis of data, on the phenomenon of teacher commitment as experienced, perceived and understood by secondary teachers, headteachers and policy makers in the context of secondary schools in Seychelles.

Phenomenographic presentation of findings

The aim of a phenomenographic approach is to explore the qualitatively different ways in which people experience or think about the same phenomenon (Marton, 1986).

The following steps have been followed in the phenomenographic analysis process:

- Step one is that of familiarisation. This involves the reading and re-reading of interview transcripts for the researcher to become familiar with the material. This iterative process represents a key element in phenomenographic analysis (Åkerlind, 2005; Bowden, 2000; Green, 2002).
- Step two is the compilation of participants' answers to the different interview questions. This involves the identification of the most significant elements from the answers given by participants.
- Step three is the process of grouping similar answers in order to form an initial classification.
- Step four is the naming of preliminary categories, which covers multiple aspects of the phenomenon of teacher commitment; hence the categories developed lead to discussions relating to variations in understanding.
- Step five involves re-examining the transcripts to ensure that the categories which have been developed reflect the interview data. This step therefore includes modifying, merging, adding or deleting categories of descriptions ensuring internal consistency of the categories.

Categories of description

Altogether four categories of understandings of teacher commitment have been identified.

They have been organised as follows:

- Category 1 reflects teacher commitment as altruism. A committed teacher has a moral obligation to care for the well-being of students under their responsibility, as well as a moral obligation towards teaching as their chosen profession.
- Category 2 reflects teacher commitment as personal qualities. A committed teacher has a personal set of values, attributes and attitudes which helps them to be more effective in their work and also helps them to remain in the teaching profession.
- Category 3 reflects teacher commitment as pedagogical content knowledge. A committed teacher possesses or deliberately seeks the subject content knowledge and the pedagogical knowledge and skills to be successful in the profession.
- Category 4 reflects teacher commitment as connectedness. A committed teacher has a sense of belonging to the school and participates actively in school life.

Findings for each category are described below, taking into account interview data from all participants across the different cases, including newly qualified teachers (teachers with the first four years in the profession), teachers with between five and ten years of experience, teachers with more than eleven years of experience, teachers who have left the teaching profession, and those who hold the positions of headteachers and policymakers. In accordance with phenomenographic analysis, each category of description is made up of different conceptions. These different conceptions are organised under each category of description into two aspects: the referential aspect which denotes the general meaning of the category and the structural aspects which show the discernment within the category.

Table 3 (below) shows the four categories indicating the referential and structural aspects for each category. The categories are described in the next section and excerpts from the interview transcripts have been carefully selected for each category and sub-category to illustrate the meaning of the conceptions from the perspective of the participants and also to present the contextual relationships between the referential and the structural aspects of each category.

Table 3: Categories of descriptions with the referential and structural aspects

Category of description	Referential aspect	Structural aspects			
		Dimensions of variations			
Category 1: Teacher commitment as altruism	Teaching as a moral obligation	Pastoral care/obligation towards the holistic development of students	Care for students' learning	Concern for fairness/equity	
Category 2: Teacher commitment as personal attributes	Personal qualities, values and attitude	Having resilience and perseverance	Being humble and patient	Passion for the profession	
Category 3: Teacher commitment as pedagogical content knowledge	Focus on content knowledge and teaching competencies	Subject knowledge	Planning for instruction	Pedagogical skills	Professional development
Category 4: Teacher commitment as connectedness	Sense of belonging to the school	Professional responsibility	Participation in school life		

Category One: Teacher commitment as altruism

The first category connects teacher commitment with altruism. This applies to the caring that teachers have for the well-being and growth of the students under their care. Such altruism is demonstrated in the teachers' feelings of loyalty, sense of duty and moral obligation towards students. Participants in this category linked their teaching with a moral purpose that emphasised how they made a difference in the lives and achievements of students. Three different sub-categories or variations have been identified in the data for this category: (1) commitment as pastoral caring for students, (2) commitment as caring for students' learning and (3) commitment as concern for fairness or equity. These sub-categories are outlined below using evidence from the interview transcripts.

Pastoral caring for students

Most participants expressed their commitment through their moral obligation towards the students they were teaching. Teachers and education stakeholders were of the view that commitment is principally seen through a caring attitude and concern for the welfare of the students, which relates to the notion of pastoral care. Teachers in particular described their role as multifaceted.

Teachers in this sub-category emphasised the notion of care as being the principal aspect of the moral obligation of a committed teacher. This was succinctly stated by Mandy, who said: "...a committed teacher is someone who cares for the students, one of the principal things; truly cares for the students," (Case 1: Mandy). This sentiment was expressed by other teachers across the different stages of the profession as well as headteachers (HT) and policy makers (PM), including Alicia (HT2) and Etelle (PM1). Particular teachers noted similar ideas although not the same words, which depict a committed teacher as one who first and foremost has the students at heart and does her/his best for the betterment of those students (Case 1: Marcus, Case 1:Lise, Case 1: John, HT: Judy).

The teachers who spoke of the importance of their pastoral role showed a sense of moral purpose that extended beyond that of an academic guide to one of a nurturer or parent figure. For example, Elai expressed that: "a committed teacher is when you're here, you're representing the parent of the student, you have to love the students and care for them" (Case 2: Elai). She clearly felt a level of responsibility for this task in acting as the students' parents. Other participants also shared this view, but expanded it to highlight other aspects of

a teacher's role or spoke more broadly about a nurturing responsibility. For example, one participant explained that the role of a teacher is to "ensure that children are well educated, nurtured and cared for," (Case 3: May). This emphasis by participants on their caring role could be interpreted in a number of ways. One interpretation emphasises the privilege felt by participants of acting like parents for their students. While this interpretation might denote the fostering of a caring relationship with students as a positive element of commitment, some comments made by participants about their duty of care could also be interpreted as representing a concern about the expectations that are placed on teachers. Some teachers claimed their duties were overwhelming and that they were required to enact multiple roles in addition to that of academic guide, including roles of parents, counsellors and social workers for students. Thus the pastoral care role that teachers identified as a feature of teacher commitment could also be viewed as an additional responsibility or burden for teachers, pointing to the complex roles of teachers and the complexity of participants' understandings of teacher commitment.

Other teachers described their duty of care as having a purpose as role models for students, which goes beyond academic support. This duty is associated with a goal or mission to prepare students for life after school. These teachers associated their commitment with their belief that they can make a difference in the lives of their students in order that they become good citizens. For teachers who held this perception, a lot of importance was placed on the aspect of pastoral care. They argued that committed teachers should be seen as role models for the students. This notion implies the teachers' moral obligation is not only to make a difference in the lives of their students, but also to be concerned with the future roles of these students in society. This sentiment was expressed in different ways. Three excerpts are given below as examples:

Committed teachers should be good examples for the students (Case 4: Rana)

...a committed teacher is a good role model for their students (Case 4: Elvira).

...first of all you are committed to your students; you give them all you have. You make sure that you teach them, first to become a model citizen (Case 3: Sam).

In general, teachers who held this perception were concerned with the holistic development of the child rather than simply focusing on academic achievement. They claimed that as

committed teachers they were serving a moral purpose in shaping the students' values. The participants felt that they were shaping the students' values for life by being role models of positive attitudes and behaviour for the students. This notion is exemplified in the comments of one participant, who stated: "I strongly believe in the holistic development of a child, I try to put it in my daily practices....ensuring they are taught the living values" (Case 3: May).

Caring for students' learning

Also embedded within this category is the moral obligation that participants felt towards students' learning and academic achievements. Participants who held this conception claimed that passing on knowledge to students should be a joy for committed teachers and that teachers should ensure that learning is taking place. This is illustrated by the following excerpts from different participants; "a committed teacher is someone who takes great joy in passing on knowledge to their pupils" (Case 4: Charles) and one who "will go out of his or her way to make sure the students are learning" (Case 2: Elaine). Within this sub-category there is a perception that the moral obligation of teachers is to ensure that, in the word of one participant, they "... give their best to their students" (Case 1: Lise). This is seen by participants to be reflected in particular practices. For example, "...someone who is really committed will be willing to take students after class hours for additional work," (case 3: Neil), thereby showing that they care for students' learning. The altruistic element here is teachers taking pleasure in seeing others succeed and being willing to do more than the basics that are required of them as teachers, for the benefit of students.

Concern for fairness/equity

Another interesting finding and dimension of teacher altruism that emerged relates to concern for fairness and equity. Participants described a moral obligation of teachers to exert the principle of equity within the everyday practice of teachers. Those teacher participants who held this view maintained that as committed teachers they should not discriminate between students based on their socio-economic backgrounds or family statuses, or their academic abilities. In this sense a committed teacher is not only seen as: "someone who can listen to students, listen to their problems and try to solve them" (Case 3: Henry), but also as "someone who doesn't look at the students' background, or the students' problems, or the students' academic level", (Case 4: Tyler). The teachers feel that, in the words of one participant, "being committed is to love our students, not to discriminate" (Case 3: Eva). For the teacher participants, the concern for fairness appears to take the form of a moral obligation to care for all students and treat them fairly and as equal, regardless of the different

socio-economic backgrounds of the students. It can also be seen in terms of meeting the needs of all students regardless of their abilities.

The examples above reflect teacher participants' understandings of teacher commitment as altruism. However, school headteachers and policymakers also viewed committed teachers as having a moral obligation, as plainly expressed in the following statement:

Teacher commitment is the kind of motivation that somebody has, a sense of purpose; I mean like, I've taken teaching as my profession; it is the devotion I give to this job, no matter how difficult the job can be. It's the willingness to succeed, and as your students see you too (PM2-Yvonne).

The idea that teacher commitment is characterised by altruistic motivations and a sense of moral obligation was shared by different groups of participants in the study. There is a close link between the concerns relating to fairness and to the previous sub-category of caring for students' learning and that of pedagogical content knowledge in relation to Category Three.

In summary, this broad category of description portrays teacher commitment as altruism, which was displayed through the moral obligation of teachers. Teachers perceive their moral obligation to care for the students' well-being in a range of social aspects, not only in relation to students' academic achievements. They consider their roles to be important to ensure the holistic development of the students, so that students become good citizens. Therefore teacher commitment is seen as teachers having a sense of moral purpose, particularly in relation to bringing about a difference in the lives of the students, which is reflected in altruistic and caring actions. It is this sense of moral purpose that describes this category.

Linked with the idea that teacher commitment reflects a moral purpose is the idea that teacher commitment relates to the personal values and attributes of individual teachers. This idea is explored in the next category.

Category two: Teacher commitment as personal attributes

Within this category of description, teacher commitment is identified with the personal attributes of the individuals who enter the teaching profession. They consider themselves to be passionate about the profession and proud to be in the role of a teacher, and they identify attributes in themselves and in others that they think help to make them committed teachers. As noted by one teacher "I think it is the personality of that person...I think this is the key to

be a committed teacher” (Case 3: Clement). Teachers who focus on personal attributes when describing what makes a committed teacher believe that a committed teacher is one who is patient, humble and consistent, and one who establishes good rapport with staff and students. The values and attributes of individuals who enter into the teaching profession that is believed will help make them committed teachers include resilience and perseverance. It is believed that these attributes allow committed teachers to succeed. Variations in dimensions within this category have been identified as: (1) teacher beliefs (2) resilience and perseverance, (3) the patient and humble teacher and (4) passion for the profession.

Resilience and perseverance

Within this sub-category teachers related their experience of commitment to their ability to handle difficult situations and deal with them as challenges to be overcome. Those teachers who emphasised the importance of personal attributes acknowledged that while teaching is a complex profession with a range of setbacks, committed teachers demonstrate resilience through their ability to remain calm and tackle problems head on, as noted by Marcus:

There are lots of challenges that we face, but to be committed is to persevere, and to have hope that we can influence the students, at least one of them at the end of the day. This is what I feel a committed teacher is (Case 1).

As evident in this excerpt, resilience is associated with perseverance. This idea is echoed by another, who claims that a resilient teacher “...will not be discouraged, not give up but rather, that teacher would be resilient to obstacles, and find ways to turn them into opportunities” (Case 3: May).

The notion of resilience and perseverance was also associated by some with the desire to succeed in overcoming challenges and in developing self-belief and efficacy. For example, Neil stated: “A committed teacher is somebody who believes that he or she can succeed, who can bring some positive changes” (Case 3). This view was shared by several other participants including headteachers. Dylan for example, expressed the idea that “a committed teacher is somebody who will look at difficulties as challenges to be met and successfully attempted, one who will not give up easily” (HT1). So the views of participants for this conception is that a committed teacher is one who has the desire to succeed, thus putting in much effort to achieve their goals despite difficulties.

Being patient and humble

This category describes the dimensions of patience and humility as features of teacher commitment as personal attributes. Patience and humility are particular attributes that, according to participants, committed teachers should possess.

In relation to personal attribute of patience, teachers who spoke of this were of the view that a patient teacher is one who maintains self-control and is able to listen to students, because according to them being patient helps teachers to understand their students better in all aspects. For these participants committed teachers show patience towards their students and this enables them to get closer to their students and to identify their personal problems and learning difficulties. The types of actions that teachers thought demonstrated patience included that of being ready to listen to the students' rather than adopting a 'domineering' attitude. Such practices will allow the students to express ideas and also encourage them to come forward if they have any problems. This was succinctly illustrated by one teacher saying, "You have to be ready to listen, because the students might be this way because they might have a problem. So you have to be ready to listen if they have a problem, talk to them to see what the problem is" (Case 1: Mandy).

The notion of patience is also related to that of humility, another aspect that emerged from the data analysis within this sub-category. Teachers who spoke of the importance of being humble believe that committed teachers should be prepared to 'go down to the level of students', that teachers are approachable and construct positive teacher-student interactions – not haughty. According to some of the teacher participants, if teachers are proud and defensive they impose a barrier between themselves and their students, which can hinder students' progress. Another common understanding is the view that committed teachers should be humble and not claim to have all the answers. Such teachers should acknowledge when they are wrong, as illustrated by the following teacher:

And you kind of get off....if you're on a white horse, you have to get off. You cannot have any pride in there. Sometimes you have to be down and dirty to their level. You have to be humble and accept when you're wrong and when you're right. If you think you're always right then you're not a good teacher (Case 1: Mandy).

Another related aspect which was noted by participants is that being humble implies that committed teachers are willing to learn from their students. Teachers holding this view believe that learning is a two way process and even if they are the teachers they feel that they

‘learn something new every day from the students’. This view was expressed almost word for word by two participants (Case 4: Tyler, Case 1: Lise). Those teachers who spoke about humility as an important attribute of a committed teacher referred to the development in such teachers as a ‘sensitivity towards other people’s feelings’, be it students, colleagues, school management or parents. For example, May stated that, “a committed teacher is one who is conscious of other people’s feelings and enthusiasm” (Case 3). Another view within this sub-category was the belief that being humble will facilitate a “good rapport with both students and other colleagues” (HT2, Alicia), thus allowing positive relationships to develop. This view was supported by other headteachers and policymakers in the study.

Passion for the profession

Some teachers perceived teacher commitment as being passionate about the teaching profession. Participants who held this view believed that a highly committed teacher was one who had teaching as a profession at heart. According to most teachers it was their passion for the profession that sustained their enthusiasm and desire to become successful teachers. Elai said: “to be a committed teacher first of all you have to **love** your job. You cannot be here for the salary or the vacation, you have to really love your job” (Case 2: Elai). Elai’s sentiment was shared by other teachers across the career stages and was also evident from the perspectives of headteachers and policymakers. For example, Didier (HT3) noted that “I would see a committed teacher as one who will take the job at heart”. Such understandings were echoed by most of the other education stakeholders.

The love for the job has been expressed in different ways. For some it was a demonstration of personal satisfaction. For example, Charles stated that: “A committed teacher looks like someone who when entering the classroom is smiling and when coming out of the classroom is also smiling” (Case 4). For others the passion for the profession was related mainly to the love for the subject or discipline. Teachers who were mainly specialised in subject areas like Arts and ICT in particular seemed to focus on passion for their subject in their talk about teacher commitment.

These teachers explained that it was their passion for the subject that was helping them to sustain their commitment despite the various challenges of the task of teaching that they were encountering.

Steve succinctly expressed this view as outlined his statement below:

I feel like I'm very motivated, I wake up every morning to come to school. It is a very difficult place to be, especially this school. The community is a little bit challenging, but I do come to work early. That shows a level of motivation. I do go out of my way to get things done; I even got things from my own pocket money. So, just to get things rolling, I feel like I am very motivated, I feel like I can do more but for the subject. It is mainly for the subject (Case 2).

This sentiment was also shared by other participants like, Jenifer (Case 2) and Henry (Case 3) who were ICT teachers. According to these teachers, it was a love for their subject of speciality that allowed them to discover new talents in their students. So for these teachers being part of developing talents in their students brought about pride and a sense of satisfaction in seeing others succeed. This sense of satisfaction was also attributed to certain personal gains in terms of recognition and getting more respect and collaboration from the students. This was explained by one teacher participant who said: "you can identify talent and skills in the students. You can help them develop. And I found out that while teaching them the skills, they tend to behave more positively, when they feel that the skills are being developed" (Case 2: Steve). Passion for the profession expressed through the love for the subject also pointed to the importance of developing students' skills in their respective subject. This view also implies that if these particular teachers did not have the love for the subject they would not be able to see the talents in their students and these talents would not be nurtured and for them this is what a committed teacher should be doing.

The derivation and description of dimensions relating to the broad category of 'teacher commitment as personal attributes' indicate that participants in this study conceived teacher commitment as a product of a range of personal qualities and attributes. Teachers and other education stakeholders claimed that resilience and the desire to succeed, humility and patience, and a passion for the teaching profession lie at the core of teacher commitment.

Category three: Teacher commitment as pedagogical content knowledge

This category of description relates teacher commitment to pedagogical content knowledge. The notion of pedagogical content knowledge refers to the teachers' subject knowledge and the pedagogical skills which are in principle rooted in the everyday work of a teacher from the stage of planning and preparation to that of lesson delivery, taking into account the classroom and school context (Shulman, 1987). The concept is drawn on here to describe

features of teacher commitment that relate to the knowledge and skills of teachers, as described by participants. Teacher participants in the study who hold a conception of teacher commitment as pedagogical content knowledge also value the continuous professional learning of teachers. Three structural aspects have been identified for this category: (1) subject content knowledge, (2) planning for instruction and (3) pedagogical skills.

Subject content knowledge

This sub-category describes a dimension of teacher commitment relating to the extent of teacher subject knowledge and confidence in presenting subject content. Teachers in the study were of the view that a committed teacher should know their subject well so that she/he delivers lessons with confidence. As expressed by one participant, “a committed teacher is someone who is confident in what he or she is delivering”, (Case 4: Charles). Knowing the subject well is considered an important aspect of a teacher’s work, which would directly influence the success and self-efficacy of teachers, as intimated by the following participant: “[a committed teacher]...is someone who believes that he or she can succeed, can bring some positive changes, and for example by knowing well the subject” (Case 3: Neil). Strong content knowledge is understood to be a prerequisite for teachers to succeed and feel confident in the classroom, and through this to develop a sense of commitment. Also classroom success and confidence are seen as evidence of teacher commitment in the sense that teachers have invested in developing content knowledge that they need for the job.

Teachers who focused on content knowledge when they talked about teacher commitment expressed the opinion that committed teachers should invest time in order to expand their professional knowledge so as to keep up to date with new developments in their subject areas, particularly at this point in time with advances in technology. These teachers claimed that such professional learning time would further enhance their commitment and would improve both the work of teachers and the students’ learning. This sentiment was expressed by several participants. Jennifer, for example, described her commitment in relation to her personal study effort:

...you study more to develop your subject so as to pass on to the students. I have to continue reading. I am this committed...I am willing to do research to answer students’ questions. If you don’t know, you go back and research (Case 2).

Likewise, Steve shared this sentiment saying that as a committed teacher:

...[you try to]...be better at what you do for both the teacher and the students. They [committed teachers] would learn more, they would read and research on how to get the subject going (Case 2: Steve).

These teachers emphasised the importance of continuous learning in order to develop professionally. This further reading/research may be in relation to the subject content or to teaching approaches, or both.

Another notion that is embedded in this idea of subject knowledge as a component of teacher commitment was the willingness to learn from colleagues and to share knowledge and expertise. For example May explained that, "...and also a committed teacher to me is someone, who is always ready to share expertise, regardless of how he or she is perceived or treated" (Case 3: May). Attitudes that support on-going learning in relation to content showed a professional commitment to sharing with colleagues. These were seen as indicators of a committed teacher. The following section elaborates the idea of learning in relation to pedagogical skills.

Pedagogical skills

The dimension of pedagogical skills relates to beliefs that participating teachers hold about their ability to engage students in learning. Teachers who emphasised the importance of pedagogical skills viewed teacher commitment as being strongly associated with catering for the educational achievement of their students, particularly responding to their individual learning needs. Teachers who held this perception implied that developing pedagogical skills meant finding ways and means to sustain their students' learning interests. This required a variety of strategies. For example, Elvira expressed the idea that, a committed teacher "...is always looking for new ways and strategies to sustain students' attention and keeping them interested" (Case 4). This sentiment was supported by other teachers, headteachers and policymakers. Ideas expressed by some participants about the importance of looking for new ways to engage and maintain student attention are extended to meeting the needs of diverse learners. The teacher participants holding this view believed that the commitment to cater for the individual learning needs of the students required teachers to deliver their lessons in a way that catered for the different abilities in the classroom and not only for high achievers, as stated by Neil: "...delivers the lesson in such a way that most of the students benefit, not

only the brighter ones” (Case 3). This example also seems to have an altruistic element related to fairness.

Pedagogical skills as a dimension of teacher commitment are also attributed to a way of ensuring student’s engagement in the lesson, hence preventing misbehaviour. One teacher participant stated that, “A committed teacher will find ways and means to get the students to behave and work” (Case 2: Steve). This sentiment was supported by several others, particularly headteachers and policymakers who emphasised that committed teachers are innovative in their teaching strategies as a way of keeping students focused and well-behaved. Such views about pedagogical skills suggest that there is a mixed motivation for the importance of developing pedagogical skills, one relating to sustaining students’ interest in lessons and supporting student learning, and the other (which is allied but different) to managing behaviour of students.

This category describes the shared view that good pedagogical skills are central to teacher commitment. Although pedagogical skills development has been identified as a separate dimension of teacher commitment, this dimension is not necessarily talked about by participants as distinct and separate from other dimensions. For example, it may not be seen as separate to development of content knowledge and planning for instruction; rather, these dimensions may be talked about as interconnected features of teacher commitment. For example Tyler reflected on what makes a committed teacher and identified various interconnected elements, including good subject knowledge, good planning and effective lesson delivery:

A committed teacher is one who comes to work, forgets about the clock in the staffroom, plans, goes and delivers, and ensures that whatever is delivered is delivered to the level of everybody, catering for everybody, and even going the extra mile as I say, to get to that one who does not get it for the tenth time (Case 4: Tyler).

Committed teachers are described as those who take a range of actions to support student learning.

Planning for instruction

Another variation within the category of ‘teacher commitment as pedagogical content knowledge’ is the notion that a committed teacher is one who is always well-prepared for all classes. Such a view was shared by both teachers and other education stakeholders. The

common view is that lesson planning and preparation is a significant element of the professional duties of a teacher, and participants who talked about this believe that it is an important foundation for successful teaching and good classroom management. The main idea expressed by participants is exemplified by Selma, a headteacher, who says, “A committed teacher is one who plans work well in advance and is always ready for class”, (HT4).

Another headteacher said: “A committed teacher is one who takes the time to plan work for his or her class”, (Case 3: Sam). This sentiment was expressed by several other teachers at different career stages of the profession, (for example, Case 1: Mandy, Teddy; Case 2: Elaine, Steve; Case 3: Eva, Neil, Clement; Case 4: Tyler, Elvira). Headteachers and policymakers also shared the view that planning and preparation is a characteristic of a committed teacher, as was evident from the following interviews:

“...he or she is always ready with his or her lesson plan, always prepared to deliver the lesson”, (H/T 5: Neige).

“And also his or her plans, records will be up to date, available all the time”, (H/T 2: Alicia).

Embedded in this notion is the belief that when lessons are prepared well in advance, it allows teachers to ensure that resources are available and organised, thus the lesson tends to run smoothly. It was also noted that even if sometimes delivery of a lesson does not go according to plan, being well-prepared was essential to cater for any eventualities, as explained by the following participant:

...you always have to be prepared when you go to class, ‘because you never know what might come up. You might come today and they cover the work quickly, they are ready to work, so you always have to have work prepared for them (Case 1: Mandy).

Thus lesson planning was seen as a kind of insurance for any circumstances that might arise.

This focus on the importance of lesson planning to ensure that lessons went smoothly is also attributed to the belief that committed teachers devote quality time for lesson preparation.

The emphasis on having quality time for lesson preparation is to ensure that required resources for the lesson are readily available and that the lesson makes provision for individual students’ abilities, even though the planning process very often requires working

extra hours. This was expressed by several participants, including the following who stated that:

A committed teacher is one who goes out to find resources, take his or her time to prepare lessons, even in the week-ends so as to respond to the needs of the individual students (Case 3: Clement).

You see, even though you are working till late, you take home school work and you work through the night, you prepare for the next day and sometimes for the next week... **I had** to make provision for student X, if he did not understand, I had to find ways as to how I need to handle it so that I get it down to him (Case 4: Tyler).

Committed teachers are attributed to those who are well-prepared. The importance of good preparation relates to lesson content and organisation, delivery skills and knowledge of the students that those teachers are teaching. Good planning allows them to anticipate potential difficulties and to provide suitable adaptations to be applied within lessons. This is a commitment to good practice in support of student learning and recognising students' different learning needs.

Category four: Teacher commitment as connectedness

For this category of description, connectedness refers to the teachers' sense of belonging to the school. This sense of belonging can be seen in teachers' articulation of feelings of professional responsibility towards the school, through the relationships that are developed and through their participation in school activities. Teacher commitment as connectedness is therefore akin to social bonding, suggesting that when teachers have this sense of connectedness they develop positive relationships with school staff, their students and parents, and this fuels their commitment. Participants share the view that committed teachers have a professional responsibility to be present for work as much as possible and to be punctual. This professional responsibility is understood to be displayed through teachers' support for school policies and their willingness to work extra hours for the benefit of the school. Hence the sub-categories or dimensional variations for the 'teacher commitment as connectedness' category are: (1) Professional responsibility towards the school as a workplace, (2) the relationships that they develop and (3) participation in school activities.

Professional responsibility towards the school as a workplace

Participants across the different cases, including headteachers and policymakers, associated teacher commitment with the professional responsibility to be present and punctual, and to be

willing to dedicate extra time for the benefit of the school that they belong to. Participants who highlighted these aspects of teacher commitment argued that a committed teacher “... should try his or her best to be there for all the lessons... not be absent from school all the time” (Case 1: Lise). This sentiment was shared by most participants in the study. These participants who shared this view associated teachers who were absent all the time with the lack of commitment. This was evident in the following interview: “a committed teacher is one who comes to work every day, and not be absent for any simple reason; a teacher who will be here and not find reasons to go out of school when they have class” (Case 2: Elai). This notion is expressed in the words of other teacher participants across the cases including headteachers and policymakers (Case 1: Lise, Teddy; Case 2: Jennifer; Case 3: Neil, Henry, Eva, Clement; Case 4: Rana, Elvira; HTs: Alicia, Neige, Selma, PM: Yvonne).

The emphasis on the importance of being present for duty extended to the issues of punctuality. Most headteachers attributed teacher commitment to “...someone who is punctual, regular to work,” (HT2: Alicia). So much significance was attached to this notion that teachers used it as an example to illustrate their level of commitment, such as the following participant who stated: “for example, me, I have been committed, I haven’t missed a day of school. I’ve always been there on time” (Case 2: Jennifer).

Others saw this sense of professional responsibility through working extra time if necessary to ensure the achievement of students and to maintain the reputation of the school. For example and as stated by John: “A willingness to work at any time, even after school hours if there is a need. And you just want to think good about your school at all times, about your children, about yourself and the staff, everybody involved”. Some teachers mentioned the involvement of teachers in extra-curricular activities (ECA) as evidence of teacher commitment, as noted in the following extract:

...someone I observed who participated in all activities organised by the school, in ECA activities as well. She was willing to work extra time. For me this is a committed person, someone who is willing to help the school to improve, participate with teachers and with students (Case 4: Joel).

For this participant, teacher commitment is through involvement in activities organised by the school as well as participation in ECA.

Connectedness through positive relationships

Teacher commitment through the sense of connectedness and belonging to the school was also attributed to feelings of being supported by the school and community, a sense of being respected and the positive relationships that teachers developed in their schools and community. For Marcus a committed teacher establishes a “positive rapport with the students, to know them, their background” (Case 1). This according to him helps to understand the problems and be in a better position to help. The importance of this positive relationship with students has also been noted by several other participants across the cases as well as other stakeholders. For example, John who rated himself as highly committed talked about his good relationship with his students and also with parents (case 1). For Alicia a committed teacher was described as “one who establishes good rapport with staff and students” (HT2). Clement (Case 3) and Debra (PM3) attributed committed teachers to those who are willing to promote team work in the school and the community.

The importance of positive relationships as part of this sense of connectedness was also discussed in relation to feeling respected by students, school management and parents. Mandy (Case 1) talks about committed teachers as those who feel that they are getting the respect that they deserve as teachers. Similarly, May (Case 3) refers to teachers being respected by students, the school management and parents, which she feels is generally lacking as an important element in sustaining commitment.

Participation in school activities

Some teachers related commitment to their involvement in the life of the school, with involvement in school activities being an indicator of their feelings of belonging to the school and their commitment to the school as their workplace. For example, one teacher explained that a committed teacher is “... somebody who feels part of the school” (Case 3: Clement). Another teacher participant talked about committed teachers as those who “...ensure for the well-being of the school in general”, (Case 3: May), by participating in activities organised by the school.

Most headteachers in the study attributed committed teachers to those who had a sense of belonging to the school. They appeared to believe that if teachers have a sense of identification with the school, they were more committed to the policy and vision of the school.

For example, the following headteacher stated that:

A committed teacher is somebody who will see everything through ...who supports the mission and vision of the school and who will support all endeavours that the school tries, (HT1: Dylan)

Headteachers who focused on school involvement as an indicator of teacher commitment were of the view that committed teachers were actively involved in a range of activities in the life of the school. This is exemplified by Selma, who said "...committed teachers are always participating in school activities", (HT3) and by Alicia, who explained that "a committed teacher will be actively involved in the school life," (HT2: Alicia). Participants related this sense of belonging to the school to the expanded role of a teacher beyond the classroom. This was evident in the words of the following headteachers:

...and is always ready to go the extra mile, not restricted only to teaching but to do other things that are required by the school, and always willing to come forward to do things and to initiate ideas, and things like that (HT5: Neige).

... always willing to participate fully in school life; and most probably a committed teacher is one who can foresee things happening and act on it; and one who supports the school, supports the policies of the school, the vision of the school (HT6: Judy)

Teacher commitment as connectedness which emerged in this category of description encompassed such perceptions as the extent that teachers felt supported and engaged in school life, the respect that they were getting and how they valued school activities through their participation and involvement. Participants talked about the importance of having a sense of belonging to the school, which was linked to the view that committed teachers were willing to work extra hours or go the extra mile for the benefit of the school and the students' learning outcomes.

The above descriptions of the categories of description for teacher commitment and the varied dimensions within these categories have presented the phenomenographic findings relating to the first research question. Four categories of descriptions are identified and described. The phenomenographic description of the phenomenon of teacher commitment has been constructed by the researcher based on the participants' experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon in the context of secondary schools in Seychelles. The next section presents similarities and differences in the different conceptions of teacher commitment across the

four cases of teachers for each category of description. Four graphs are presented below in order to illustrate how the variations in participants' perceptions are distributed across the different cases for each category. The perceptions of headteachers and policymakers are also illustrated, showing understandings of teacher commitment from the perspectives of those who manage and are responsible for policy development and implementation in schools.

Similarities and differences in the conceptions of teacher commitment by groups of participants

The previous section described phenomenographic findings pertaining to the way participants in the study conceptualise teacher commitment and these have been ascribed to four different categories. In this section similarities and differences between the four cases are presented for each category. Although the study is not quantitative, graphs are being used to display the qualitative data to facilitate comparison of data across the different cases. The purpose of this is purely illustrative. The four graphs in figures 2 to 5 (below) illustrate the variations in perceptions of teacher commitment for the different cases of teacher participants and education stakeholders through the number of utterances for each category. As outlined in chapter three, each case consists of five teacher participants, except for case three which comprises six participants. The education stakeholders in the study are made up of six headteachers and four policymakers.

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, in phenomenographic analysis variations in the conceptions that people have on a particular phenomenon are identified. These conceptions are identified through the number of utterances which emerged from the data. Therefore utterances in phenomenographic analysis represent the number of times that a particular idea is mentioned. In the graphs presented below an attempt has been made to represent the number of utterances for each conception and also to provide an overall view of how the four categories of description are distributed among the participants in the different groups. The number of utterances does not necessarily equate the number of participants in each group. These utterances could be more or less than the number of participants, depending on the number of times ideas reflecting the particular conception have been mentioned.

Figure 3 (below) shows that the sense of altruism is more strongly focused on by participants with more than eleven years of experience (Case 3). There were more utterances from this group for the conceptions of ‘pastoral care’ and ‘caring for students’ learning’.

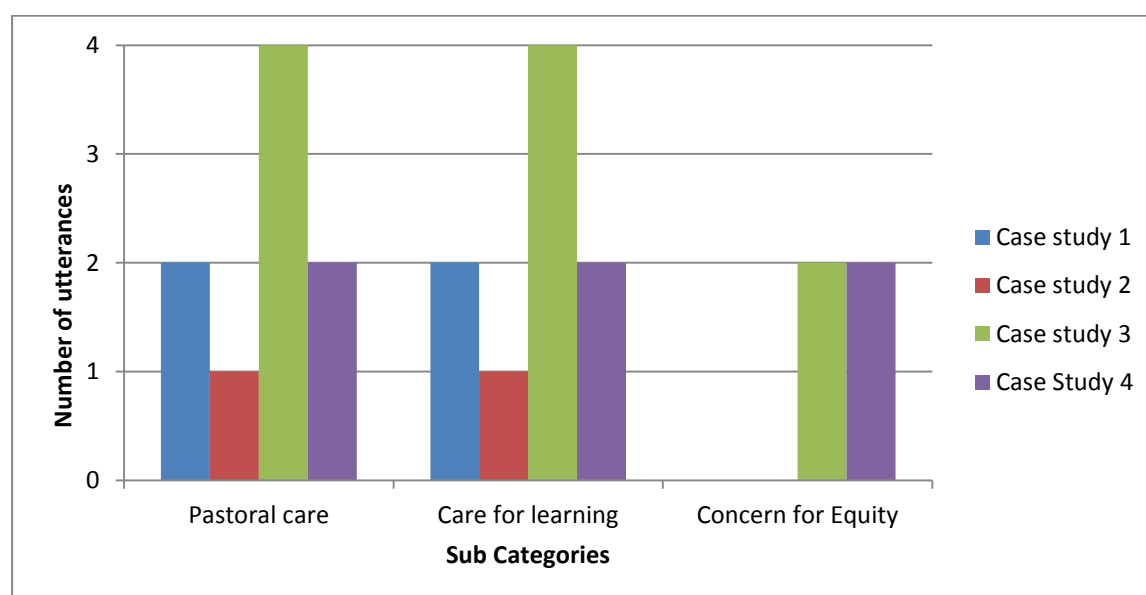


Figure 3: Sense of Altruism

Even though there were six participants in case three as compared to five in other cases, a difference between the numbers of utterances for the two conceptions is apparent. The difference suggests that different groups in my study (that correspond with teachers in different stages of their careers) appear to emphasise different features of teacher commitment as altruism.

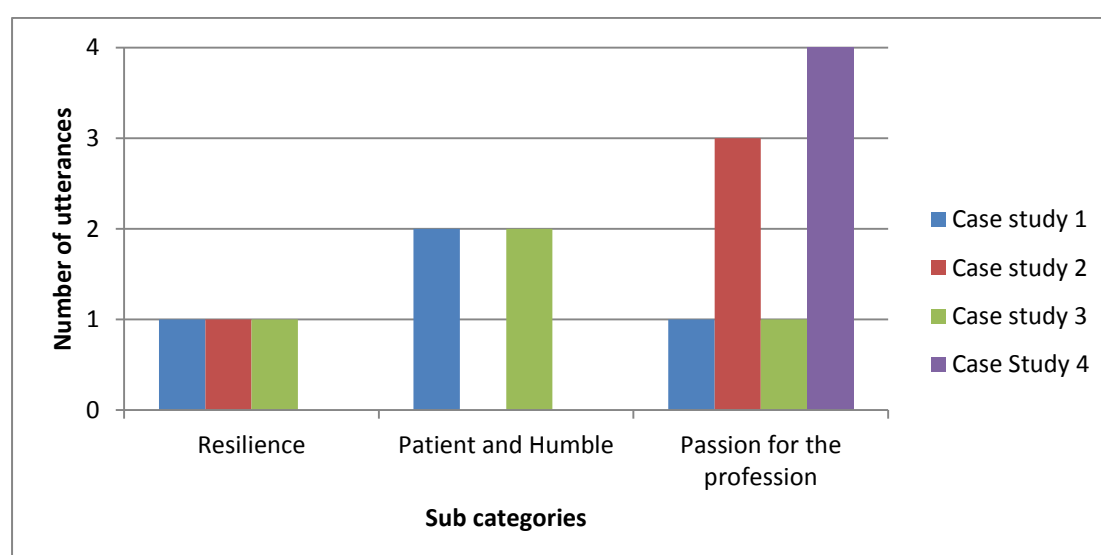


Figure 4: Case representation of category two-personal attributes

For category two (Figure 4 above), the same number of utterances have been identified for the three cases of teachers who are still in the profession.

This supports the interpretation that resilience is a feature of commitment that appears to be seen by teachers across career stages as important or a key to being a committed teacher. However, no utterances on resilience were identified from case four (teachers who have left the profession) and no utterances for the conceptions of patience and humility were recorded from participants in cases two and four. This may or may not mean that people in these groups see these dimensions as key features of teacher commitment, or as indicators of a committed teacher. Because they were not specifically mentioned or highlighted does not mean that, if questioned specifically in relation to these factors, teachers would not acknowledge them as dimensions of teacher commitment. However, the data suggest that teachers in different groups emphasise different features in relation to teacher commitment when asked to speak about their work and in their spontaneous responses to questions about their ideas of what a committed teacher looks like and about their personal levels of commitment.

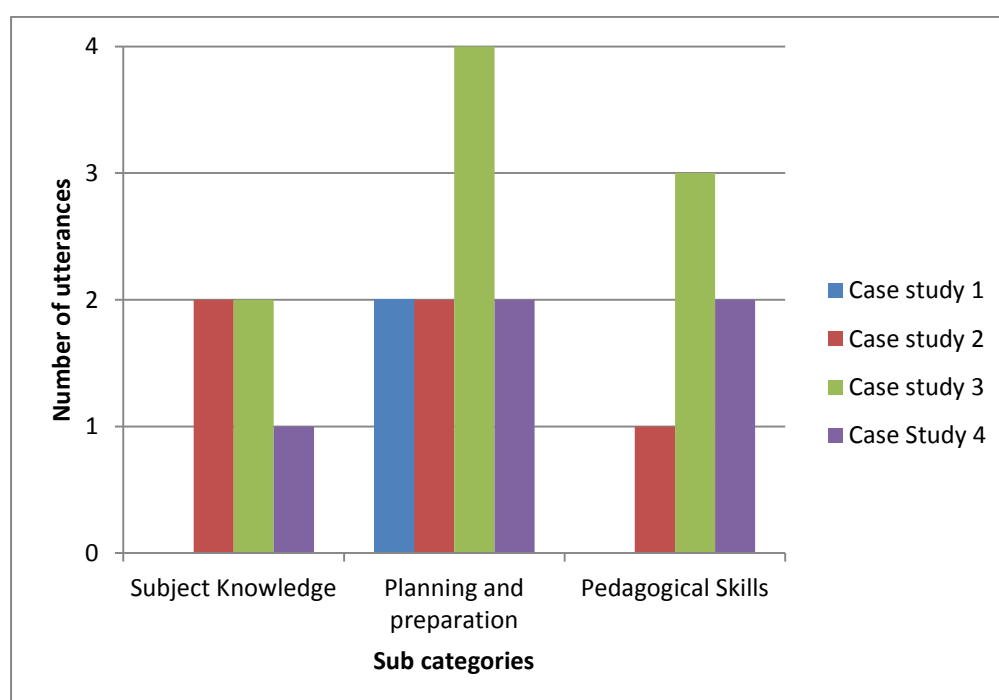


Figure 5: Case representation of category three-Pedagogical content knowledge

Figure 5 (above) represents the third category and as evident, newly qualified teachers (Case 1) made no mention of the importance of subject knowledge. More utterances for this conception came from teachers with between five and ten years of experience. The importance of planning and preparation has been prominent among all the cases, but more dominant among case three participants, who have more than eleven years of teaching experience.

Category four is illustrated in Figure 6 (below).

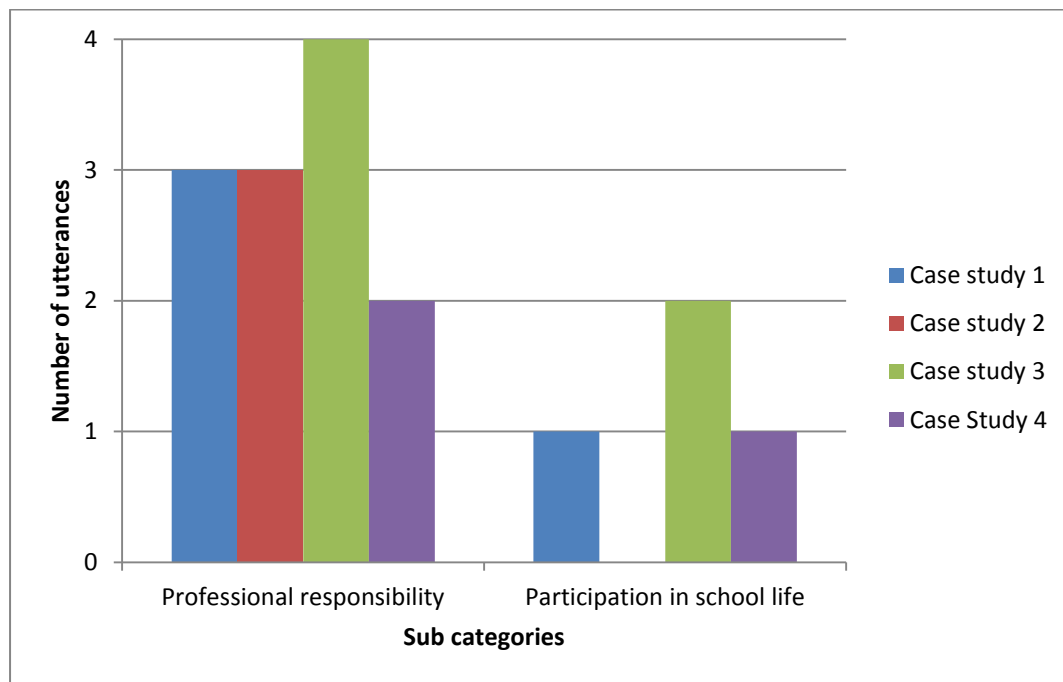


Figure 6: Case representation of category 4-connectedness

Professional responsibility has more utterances than the other sub-category which is participation in school activities. Among the utterances for professional responsibility, the notion of being present and punctual for work gained more prominence from participants in all cases. Fewer utterances have been recorded for participation in school life, particularly from Case 2 participants.

A general picture of the overall number of utterances for each category by each case, which comprise teachers at different career stages, including a group of teachers who have left the profession (Case 4), and including the headteachers and policymakers is illustrated in the graph below (Figure 7).

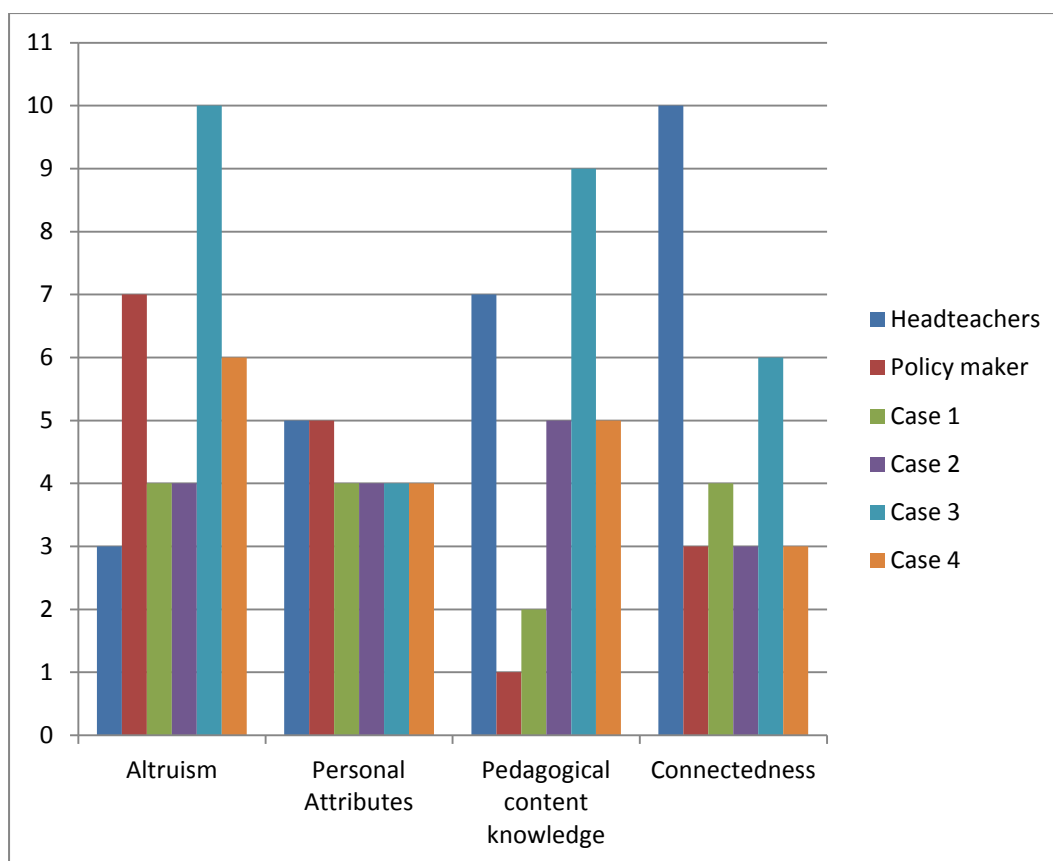


Figure 7: Utterances for each category by group of participants

The cross-case description of analysis of data for the first research sub-question shows that newly qualified teachers (Case 1) place more emphasis on altruism and the personal qualities of the teacher, when conceptualising teacher commitment. There were fewer utterances from this group on pedagogical content knowledge. These teachers are comparatively new to the profession and it might be expected that they would be anxious about pedagogical content knowledge and that they would highlight this aspect of teacher commitment. But they have not. This raises questions about the experiences of teachers in this and other groups that lead them to conceptualise teacher commitment differently and emphasise different aspects and dimensions of teacher commitment. Answers cannot be provided from this data about the experiences of different groups, but it raises questions about teachers' experiences (to be explored in the next chapter).

Another notable difference between the NQTs (Case 1) and other groups is that those teacher participants in case study one expressed strong views about the relationship between commitment of teachers and attendance and punctuality as compared to other teacher groups, while there were fewer utterances from the NQTs relating to involvement in school activities.

Teachers with between five and ten years of experience (Case 2), similar to newly qualified teachers, attached much importance to altruism and personal qualities of teachers. However, their main concern was with pedagogical content knowledge. For this group more emphasis was on subject content knowledge and planning and preparation. Two participants from this group were also heads of department (HOD) in their subject areas, hence the emphasis on planning and preparation might be reflecting their everyday encounter with teachers in their department. This is also likely to be the situation in relation to attendance and punctuality. HODs could be expected to be concerned with these things, given their responsibilities for curriculum implementation and classroom teaching across classes and year levels within their departments. Teachers in this group made fewer utterances for the category of connectedness. For teachers who had been teaching for more than eleven years (Case 3), their experience was evident through their responses. They provided more details in their responses and their answers often incorporated aspects of all the categories. They talked about different things based on their eleven or more years of experience as teachers while trying to compare what their early experiences were to what they are experiencing today. There are more utterances relating to the categories of altruism and pedagogical content knowledge as compared to other teacher groups and to that of education stakeholders.

The responses of headteachers and policymakers in relation to this first research sub-question show different level of emphasis for each category of description. While headteachers appear to be mainly preoccupied with the running and effectiveness of the school, which is reflected in the category of connectedness, the policymakers appear to be particularly concerned with the inner qualities of individuals who join the teaching profession, which is illustrated in the category of altruism.

The following section shows the relationship between the four categories of description through the phenomenographic outcome space.

The outcome space of participants' conceptions of teacher commitment

An outcome space in phenomenographic research provides a structural framework showing how the categories of description relate to each other. Figure 8 below shows the outcome space of the phenomenon of teacher commitment, which depicts the range of ways in which teachers and education stakeholders (comprising headteachers and policymakers) experience,

perceive and understand teacher commitment in the context of secondary education in Seychelles.

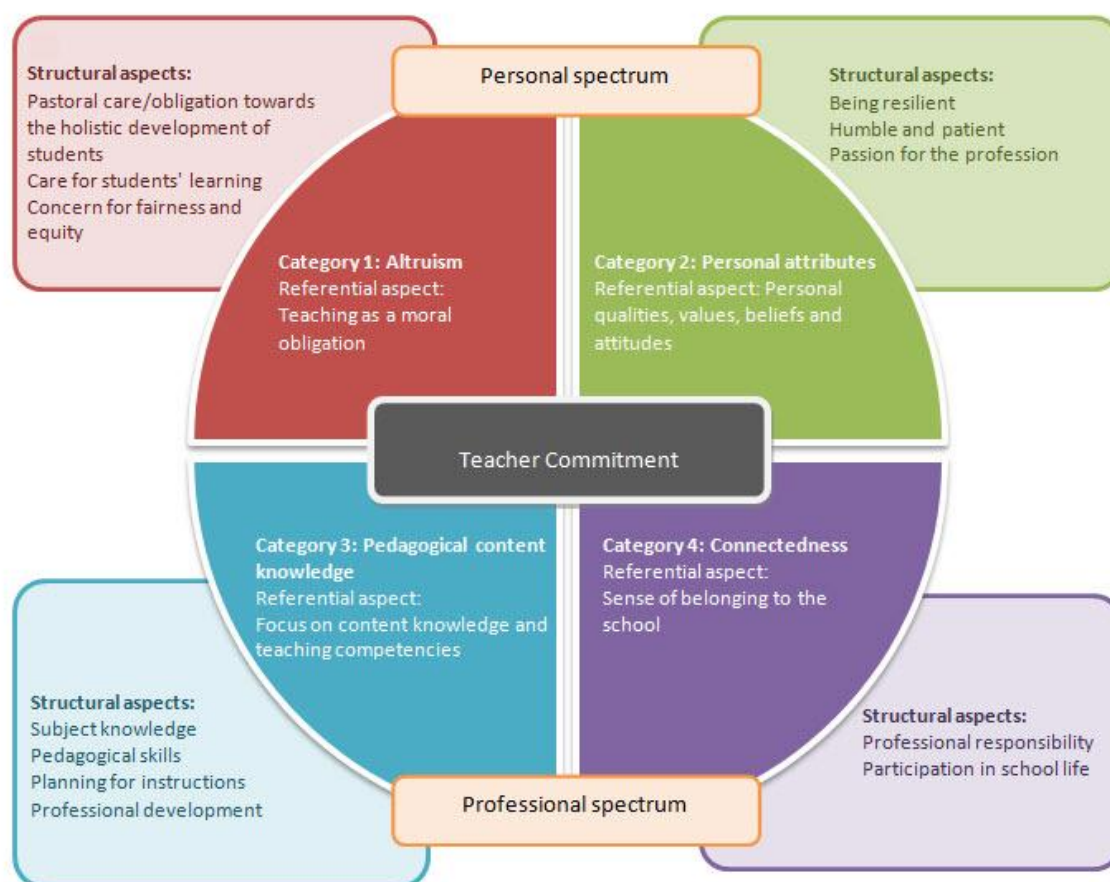


Figure 8: Outcome space of participants' conceptions of teacher commitment

The structural framework has been organised under two main spectra, which reveal how participants conceive teacher commitment and it also reflects the complexity of the phenomenon of teacher commitment. These two spectra are the personal and the professional. The outcome space has been framed in the form of a circle, where each category of description is one part of this circle in order to show the complexity of teacher commitment. Thus the different ways of experiencing and understanding this phenomenon are seen as part of a circular and interconnected whole. The personal spectrum relates to personal beliefs and qualities of teachers that participants identify as characteristics or dimensions of teacher commitment and on which they focus when talking about teacher commitment, whereas the professional spectrum relates to professional roles and responsibilities. The two spectra and the affiliated categories are discussed further below.

The personal spectrum

The personal spectrum relates to the teacher as the individual and what he or she brings into the teaching profession. The two categories of “altruism” and “personal qualities” have been placed within this spectrum and they have been positioned at the top level of the diagram to show their relative importance and representing the cornerstone of teacher commitment.

As already described in the reporting of the phenomenographic analysis, most participants in the study relate commitment to the duty of care for students’ well-being. The act of altruism is expressed through the teachers’ moral obligation to ensure the holistic development of the students in order to become good citizens, thus the focus of committed teachers is understood to be on the needs and interests of the students rather than their own. Altruism is also displayed through caring for students’ learning and caring for students’ educational achievement.

The other category within the personal spectrum is that of “personal qualities”. This is closely related to “altruism”, as altruism is enhanced through the personal values, beliefs and personal attributes of those who are deemed to be committed teachers. As reflected in the data participants in the study acknowledged the challenges of the teaching profession, but also felt that the personal attributes of a teacher should allow him/her to persevere and develop resiliency in the profession. Therefore conceptions of committed teachers reflect individuals with patience and humility, and who have the belief that they can make a difference despite the challenges they face. Committed teachers are understood to have passion for the profession or for the subject that he or she is teaching. Hence, the personal spectrum of the outcome space is central to understanding how participants in the study perceive teacher commitment. However, the personal spectrum is complemented by the professional spectrum, which together, operates to provide a portrait of a committed teacher.

The Professional spectrum

At the bottom of the structural framework are the categories of “pedagogical content knowledge” and “connectedness”. These two categories relate to the specific duties of a teacher within the context of the school. Participants emphasised the importance of “pedagogical content knowledge” as the core professional determinant of a committed teacher. Pedagogical content knowledge is closely linked to ‘connectedness’ as both reflect the way participants view their professional responsibilities as committed teachers. The

importance of connectedness is seen in the sense of being part of wider school life and contributing to that life.

Hence, both personal and professional spectra are reflected in the ways that teachers conceive their commitment, and that headteachers and policymakers conceptualise teacher commitment. They encapsulate a range of categories and dimensions that can be used to describe and define teacher commitment. These two spectra are distinct but interconnected.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented the results of the phenomenographic part of the study. The findings have been structured using phenomenographic procedures as outlined in chapter three. These findings show that participants hold different perceptions of teacher commitment, which have been organised into four different but interrelated categories. Four categories of description that emerged from the data have been presented along with the variations within each category. These categories are: altruism, personal qualities, pedagogical content knowledge and connectedness. The variations within the four categories represented in terms of referential and structural aspects have been defined and explained using evidence in the form of excerpts from the interview data. The categories of description have been logically organised into the outcome space as illustrated in Figure 7. Thus the outcome space represents a summary of how the participants in the study perceive the phenomenon of teacher commitment. In the next chapter findings are presented from the case study analysis pertaining to the four cases of teachers at different stages of their teaching careers.

Chapter five: Teacher commitment across careers

Introduction

My study of the literature on teacher commitment has shown that commitment fluctuates across a career as well as showing contextual differences between countries and settings (Day et al., 2007; Fraser et al., 1998; Huberman, 1993). The findings from my study similarly support the notion that the concept of teacher commitment needs to be understood in different ways thus portraying the complex nature of the phenomenon. These broad understandings of the complexities of teacher commitment underpin the case study analysis presented in this chapter. Consistent with the interpretive methodology and reflecting social constructionist assumptions, the data in this chapter demonstrate the ways that the participants have construed their experiences of commitment within their social contexts as they have explained their motivations to teach on career entry and beyond.

The chapter is structured into three different sections, the first of which is an overview of the motivations for entry into the profession. This section incorporates findings from all teacher participants across the cases and shows links to the literature. The second section covers findings on the on-going commitment of the four groups of teacher participants; newly qualified teachers, mid-career teachers, experienced teachers and exiting teachers with links made to findings in the literature. The final section in this chapter provides a summary across the cases.

Motivation to teach

Before exploring teacher commitment across the different career stages, it is important to look at what motivated these teachers to select teaching as a career, an idea supported by Troman and Raggl (2008), who emphasised the value of, "...identify[ing] important data on personal dispositions in terms of identity [and] commitment" (p. 90). A focus on motivation to teach serves as an indicator of an initial sense of commitment. This then serves as a benchmark against which changes in trajectories and levels of commitment can possibly be established. The participants across the four case studies have provided a range of factors for their decisions to join the teaching profession. These reasons can be classified into five different themes, namely: ideological reasons; opportunities presented to do something else; being inspired by others; conditions of work; and love for the subject. These themes are elaborated below.

Ideological reasons

The most popular reasons for entering teaching are attributed to idealistic motives expressed as the passion for the profession, but with different emphases. For some this passion was expressed through the ‘love for children’ and the desire to impart knowledge. Mandy elaborated:

I love being around children and definitely it’s an opportunity ...teaching is an opportunity to impart my knowledge, what I know to them, whilst being around them, and seeing them develop, seeing them grow up and being part of that development (Case 1)

Mandy’s passion is expressed in claims relating to her concern for the children’s development as individuals in society. Similarly, May (Case 3) noted the love for children which was extended to the desire to ‘see the holistic development of the child’ as the driving motif for her entry into teaching. For Marcus his passion was expressed through his strong desire to ‘make a difference in the lives of the students’ and for him teaching is seen as a powerful career which would allow him to do that, as he stated:

Well, what I always say to anybody who asks me that question is, if there is one job that has had a very strong influence on me it is teaching ...there is a lot of power in being a teacher because you can change people around you (Case 1).

A number of other participants across the cases shared similar sentiments, particularly in relation to teaching being a profession which would allow the ‘sharing of knowledge to others’ and ‘contributing to the development of the youths of the country’. Therefore, the passion expressed by these participants relates to their perceptions of teaching as being a profession of influence and value in society.

Other participants related their passion for teaching to their personalities and their perceived personal qualities. For example, for Elai (Case 2) ‘teaching is a vocation’. She held the view that she had both ‘the characteristics and the character to be a teacher’. So for her ‘teaching was a calling’ matching her identity as a person. In a similar vein, Joel (Case 4) expressed the passion for the profession. For him teaching came naturally as according to him he had ‘what it takes’, as expressed in the following excerpt:

For me teaching came as something natural. I have this fatherly nature and in my group of friends I have this guiding attitude, so I think it was automatic for me. It’s not something that I had to take long to decide. I wanted to teach. It was my choice.

So according to Joel the awareness of his appropriate personal qualities for the profession came through his involvement in youth activities. Likewise, Tyler's (Case 4) explanation for choosing teaching rested on his abilities and qualities, but this was more related to his intellectual qualities, rather than as a 'calling' as it was for Elai and Joel. Yet, all three participants have nevertheless talked about their perceived qualities as reasons to explain their pathway into teaching.

Opportunities

Opportunities relate to social and educational context of Seychelles and to personal needs and circumstances. Opportunities emerged as a common theme for teachers across the cases expressed with different orientations. John's (Case 1) choice of teaching as a career was an opportunity emanating from his observation of a teacher shortage in Seychelles. For example, he was aware of a teacher shortage at the school he himself had attended. Such realisation had prompted him to think about a career in teaching for he saw job opportunities given the shortage and liked the idea of job security. Similarly, Eva (Case 3) shared a concern for the shortage of teachers in the country, particularly in her subject area as her reason for wanting to have a career in teaching. It was this same concern for a teacher shortage that Lise (Case 1) joined teaching noting that it was an 'easy entry' because of the shortage.

For a number of other teachers teaching was seen as a great opportunity for further training and better career prospects. For some, like Lise (Case 1) and Charles (Case 4), teaching was an opportunity for overseas training to obtain a degree. Prior to the establishment of the University of Seychelles secondary teachers who completed a diploma locally were sent to an overseas institution for a degree qualification, so this was a motivating factor for some to join teaching. On the other hand, for five of the participants (all career changers) teaching is an opportunity to upgrade personal knowledge and skills. This was captured in Teddy's words: "...because of the vast opportunities that exist in teaching. I lacked certain skills and knowledge, that's why I joined teaching" (Case 1). For Teddy that opportunity had presented itself with the introduction of the new curriculum in Technology and Enterprise. A particular difference in the Seychelles setting is that teachers in certain subject areas are not recruited yearly, but rather as needs arise and depending on the availability of resources, both physical and human. Teddy, Jennifer, Rene and Henry had the opportunity to pursue training to become Art and Technology and Enterprise teachers for this very reason. This for them was also seen as an opportunity to do something different and more challenging.

Neil (Case 3) saw 'prospect in teaching at the time' and for him this was an opportunity for a stable career as he was not successful in his first choice. Teaching provided a sense of stability for Jennifer (Case 2) who had been in a number of different jobs prior to teaching. Clement (Case 3) was posted to schools after his Advanced Level Studies (Cambridge A Levels) as a supply teacher while awaiting his scholarship for overseas training. He enjoyed teaching, so he pursued his career as a teacher upon completion of his degree.

Further reasons for seeing teaching as an opportunity are attributed to personal circumstances, as in the case of Lise and Jennifer who had both started families. In contrast was Sam, who had moved to another island. For him teaching was a career opportunity as he possessed the required qualifications for the job and there was a likely absence of other career openings. So for some teaching was seen as a job opening, particularly when they had been searching for the right career fit, as it was for Jennifer (Case 2). For others it was an opportunity for progress and advancement, very often accompanied by an opportunity for further qualifications.

Inspired by others

A number of teachers cited being inspired by others as their motivating factor for joining the profession. Being children of teaching parents influenced both John (Case 1) and Marcus (Case 1), who had seen first-hand the attractions of teaching from being close to their parents. For others it was the inspiration of past teachers particularly from their subject areas, like Jennifer (Case 2) and Rana (Case 4). Jennifer elucidated that: "I looked up to my Art teachers. I have changed many Art teachers over the years and I always wanted to be in their place". On the other hand, for Neil (Case 3) it was the encouragement of his teachers to enter teaching that contributed to his decision. The data suggests that inspiration from others came from both active encouragements from others, particularly family members, and from the role models presented by respected teachers.

Conditions of work

A number of teachers attributed their motivation to some of the conditions that teaching provided. The most common among these was in relation to the school holidays, which emerged as a main motivating factor not only from teachers with families, but others alike. For Jennifer (Case 2) and Lise (Case 1) the school holidays were an attraction because of their family circumstances. Teaching as a career was believed to be ideal giving them the

necessary holiday alignment to be with their children. For Elaine (Case 2), the school holidays were also an attraction because these were ‘longer than in other professions’. The findings suggest that the advantages of having more leave time may be seen as a motivating factor to choose teaching as a career and might also be seen as an incentive for teachers to remain in the profession. This was seen as a good fit in the context of these participants’ family life.

Love for the subject

Three of the participants were mainly motivated by the love for the subject. Steve (Case 2) stated:

It was not really about teaching; it was more about the subject that I was going to teach. I was trained as an artist first. Coming into teaching from being an artist was an easier transition.

So for Steve the main reason was the passion for the subject and the desire to share his expertise with others as a means of promoting the subject. Both Jennifer (Case 2) and Eva (Case 3) expressed similar reasons to Steve in that the love for the subject was among the pushing forces for joining teaching. The data indicate that the attitude and enthusiasm towards the subject of specialisation can be influential in the decision to enter the teaching profession. This is particularly the case for shortage subjects.

Summary and links to literature

The findings which have emerged from this study show that teachers in Seychelles generally share similar reasons which motivated them to take up teaching as a profession. In this section I make sense of the similarities and differences between the different cases by drawing on literature. Figure 9 (below) provides an overview of the similarities and differences in these motivating factors across the different groups of teachers representing the different stages of their teaching careers.

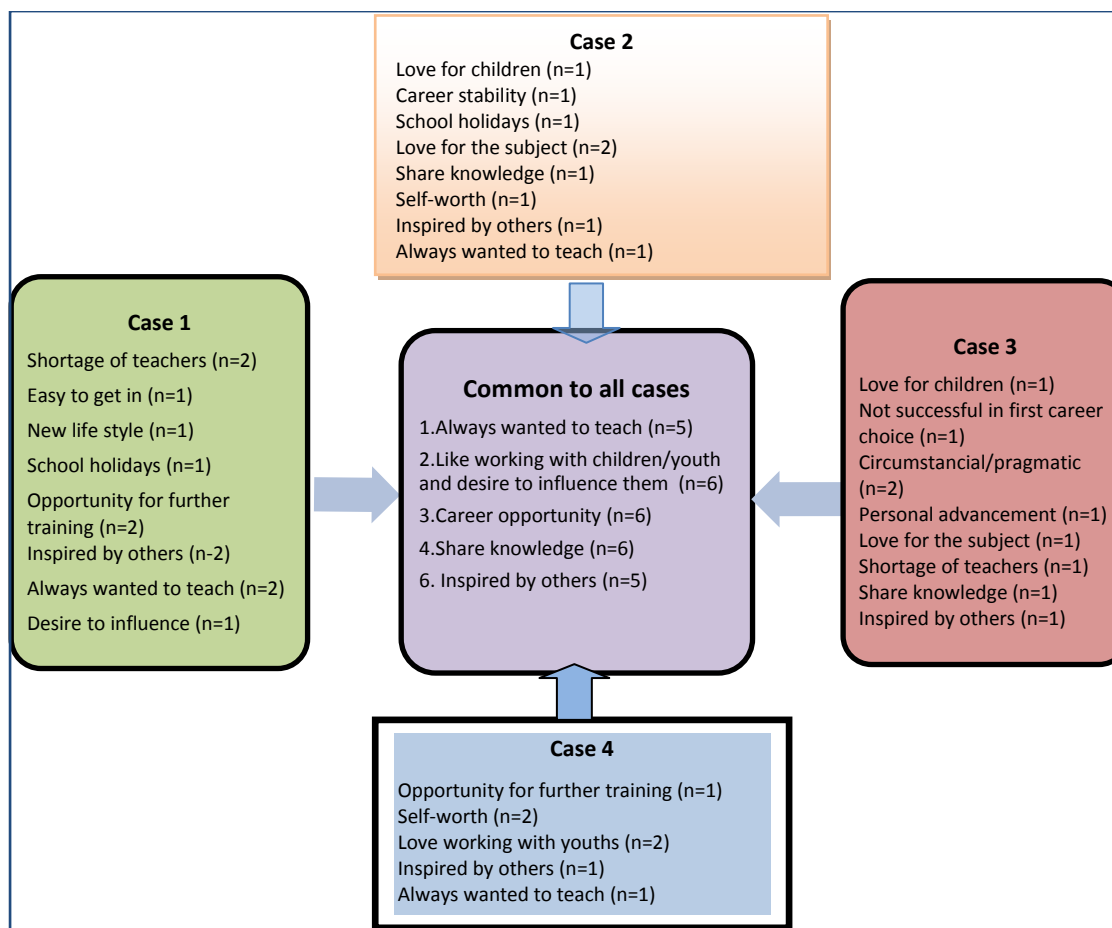


Figure 9: Summary of reasons for joining teaching

The contention in literature that many teachers enter the profession for idealistic reasons was supported in this study. Literature suggests that the most popular factors for joining teaching revolve around ‘interpersonal theme’ (Lortie, 1975) or ‘ideological’ factors (Cochran-Smith, 2004). These reasons were mainly related to personal motives of ‘the love for children’ and ‘desire to work with children’ or ‘to impart knowledge’. These personal motives also emerged as dominant in studies by a number of other scholars investigating motivation to become teachers (Brown, 1992; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Lovett, 2007; Nieto, 2005). For some teachers, teaching was a ‘calling’ and they referred to having what it took to be a teacher based on their perceived qualities. These could be either personal qualities or academic/intellectual qualities. For another group their entry into teaching was an inspiration by significant others, a common trend to that of studies conducted in New Zealand (Cameron et al., 2006; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Lovett, 2007).

Some extrinsic motives also emerged across the cases of teachers and reasons such as career advancement and school holidays were cited. Such extrinsic factors were more dominant in

studies conducted in developing nations (Bastick, 2000; Yong, 1995; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). For example, in Bastick's (2000) study trainee teachers in Jamaica gave school holidays as their reason for choosing teaching as a career.

Some authors have distinguished between career changers when presenting data on career choice decisions. In my study, seven out of the twenty-one teachers were career changers. The reasons that these participants gave for joining teaching were mainly extrinsic and revolved around career advancement and school holidays. This is different to the findings of Chambers (2002), which showed that altruistic motives dominated the range of reasons why career changers moved into teaching. However, such motivating factors as employment security and job stability were consistent with the findings of Priyardharshini and Robinson-Pant's (2003) study of second-career teachers' motivation to join teaching. Those who moved frequently from one job to another before settling in teaching were labelled 'serial careerist' (p. 100). In my study extrinsic reasons for joining teaching were more common among career changers, but were also evident among those who had teaching as first career. Among the less common reasons which emerged particularly among career changers in my study was that of joining teaching to suit a new life style. This is an emerging trend particularly in the contemporary context where more and more individuals are joining teaching at a later stage in their lives.

There were other subtleties among the reasons that teacher participants in my study provided in comparison with other studies. These subtleties may be explained by the particular context of my study. For example, a shortage of teachers was given as a reason by three of the participants, a finding not noted in previous studies. Because of the country context shortage in the context of Seychelles, some participants viewed teaching as a profession with an 'easy entry', and better job security for some. Nuances were also evident in relation to the 'love for the subject' as a main reason for entering teaching. The love for the subject of specialisation emerged as the second most popular reason in Jarvis and Woodrow's (2005) study of secondary student teachers' motivation to teach in the UK. However, a teaching subject is not necessarily consistently favoured among participants in any particular study as it varies according to need and context. For example, those participants in my study who stated such a reason, their responses were mainly in relation to non-academic subjects or shortage subjects. This could be explained by the particular context of Seychelles, where availability of training

for some subject areas is not consistent every year and also in subjects where there is an acute shortage of teachers.

Another example of some differences in participants' responses pertained to career opportunity. Opportunities as a theme emerged in Pop and Turner's (2009) study of student teacher commitment to teaching in the US, but these were in relation to career opportunities which could be obtained through teaching. In my study opportunities were mainly attributed to further training to obtain better qualifications or having a new opening into teaching after experiencing other careers.

In contrast to previous studies in developing nations (Bastick, 2000; Yong, 1995a; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004), teachers in my study made no reference to salary. In the context of Seychelles, training of teachers is financed by the Government and student teachers also receive an allowance while on training. However, this was not indicated by teachers in my study as being an attraction to teaching. The lack of any mention by participants of money (in respect of salary or payments made in training) or motivation attributable to salary/potential earnings is interesting because it is in contrast to other studies. The data does not offer an explanation for this. The money factor (in training and in relation to salaries) could be something that is important to participants, but is perhaps so 'obvious' or assumed that they have not mentioned it. Or it could be that it is of lesser significance to the particular participants than other factors. Therefore, the interest of those participants in career opportunities and job security could have some implied financial component. For example, Teddy's reason to join teaching for career advancement could indicate financial interests, as salary increases often go hand in hand with career advancement. After all, within the context of this study salary has also been given as a reason for teachers to leave the profession, which suggests that money may be a motivating factor on entering the profession, although not emphasised and explained by participants. The role of salary in relation to decisions to leave the profession will be discussed further in this chapter and the next.

Despite the difference in context, a number of the stated reasons for joining teaching are consistent with those of previous research in international literature (Brown, 1992; Cameron et al., 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Lovett, 2007; Nieto, 2005; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Yong, 1995a; B. Young, 1995). However, a number of variations have been identified within the particular context of Seychelles, which is that of a developing post-

colonial nation. Contrasting with studies that suggest a limited number of key motivators for joining teaching such as the desire to work with children, influencing the youth or imparting knowledge, the teachers in this study displayed a complex range of interconnected motivations. These include some more specific motivating factors like teacher shortage, new life-style, promoting the subject, ease of entry to teaching and believing in their abilities.

This section has featured a discussion of the motivation levels of the groups of teachers for entering teaching and has highlighted the variations in their responses. Responses specific to the context of Seychelles have been identified and the extent to which these findings are similar or different to those of previous studies has been briefly discussed. The next section focuses on those teachers' experiences within the profession which determine the length of their time in teaching. Investigation of the sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the teachers helps in determining their perceived commitment to remain or quit teaching.

Ongoing commitment: to stay or go

Despite the enthusiasm to teach expressed by the majority of teachers in the study, there were a number of factors at play when it came to sustaining this enthusiasm over the years in teaching. This section presents findings on these factors and how they impact on these teachers' commitment at the different points in their career. The data show the potential variations of these teachers' trajectories at the different stages in terms of their decisions to remain or leave teaching and for the exit teachers show the reasons why they left.

Case 1: NQTs: Disillusion and reality shock

Case study one consisted of five newly qualified teachers within the first three years of practice. A distinguishing feature of this particular stage is that newly qualified secondary teachers in Seychelles (whether they have completed a Diploma in Secondary Education or hold a Bachelor of Education Degree) are bonded to the Ministry of Education for five years. These teachers are required to work in state schools for the duration of their bonded period. In the selected cohort for this case, there were four teachers who held a Diploma in Secondary Education after completing two years of training at the National Institute of Education in Seychelles. The fifth participant held a Bachelor of Education Degree in his subject, which was obtained from an overseas institution. Table 4 (below) contains a profile of participants in this case.

The main factors for this case of teachers that influenced their thoughts about whether to stay or leave teaching were the extent that they were supported by the school as their new working environment, their working conditions and the relationships that the tasks of teaching entailed.

Table 4: Profile of Case 1 participants

Name	Gender	Teaching Experience	Qualification	Subject
Lise	F	9 months	Diploma	Science
Mandy	F	2 years	Diploma	Social Science
Marcus	M	3 years	BEd	Social Science
John	M	2 years	Diploma	Mathematics
Teddy	M	9 months	Diploma	Technology and Enterprise

Three potential variations in trajectories can be identified in this cohort of beginning teachers. They represent teachers who wanted to continue in teaching, those who were indecisive and others who were planning to leave. Figure 10 (below) shows these variations for the cohort of beginning teachers.

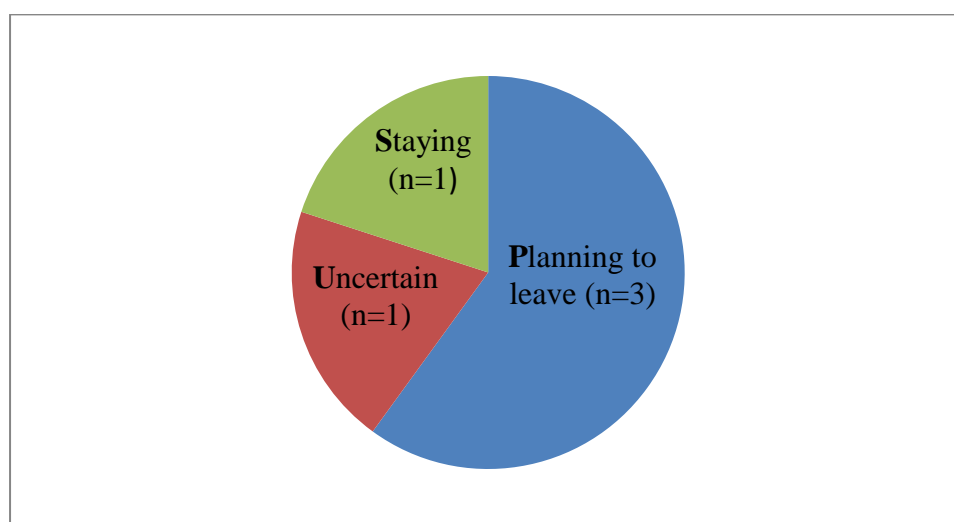


Figure 10: Potential trajectories of Case 1 participants

Staying

Only one of the five participants expressed, without any hesitation, a desire to remain in teaching. For John there was no changing his mind. He had made a commitment to teaching and that was that. He said: “I will remain until I can no longer work. This is how I am feeling

right now”. That decision was due in part to the high level of support that John was getting from his employing school. He enjoyed strong support from ‘the staff and the headteacher’ and he valued the autonomy he had in being able to ‘explore and do new things’. Therefore John’s sense of efficacy was strengthened by having a supportive and collaborative culture within the school and having the opportunity to find out what works so that he can build his teaching repertoire. Coming from a family of teachers, he was fortunate to receive support from them. Nevertheless, as a beginning teacher he mentioned feeling somewhat disappointed at times mainly with the perceived negative attitudes of students’ towards their learning and with their misbehaviour. He also expressed his dissatisfaction with the Ministry’s training plan, as he felt that:

A very big problem as well is training, this is also one main reason why they [NQT] are leaving, it’s because of scholarship, and I’ve been hearing those from my school complaining, this is one of our preoccupation, because we want to move on with our education level as well.

His dissatisfaction with the system was also expressed in relation to the lack of physical security for teachers in the schools. He believed that it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to ensure that the school was a safe environment and had adequate facilities such as classroom furniture. John also made mention of the lack of parental and community support at times. Despite these difficulties, the support that he was getting from the school in general enhanced his sense of efficacy and his sense of belonging to the school. He indicated: “I always feel good about my school”. John was participating in all activities organised by the school and was a member of the school’s social committee. According to him he had also established a good relationship with his students and had taken on a challenge to bring about positive changes in their motivation towards learning. Even in the absence of an established induction programme, he felt that the more experienced teachers in his school supported him in his tasks and that he was ‘learning a lot from them’. These factors contributed to John’s sustained commitment and led to his conviction to remain in teaching.

Indecisive

One of the teachers in this group expressed uncertainty when it came to his decision to stay or leave. Teddy, who had been teaching for nine months at the time of the interview, felt that he was still in the process of adaptation and learning the tasks of teaching, and he said ‘teacher education only provides the basics’. Furthermore he said “I don’t know how long I will stay; maybe as long as I can”. In saying this he also noted his frustration with perceived student

misbehaviour and inadequacy of resources. Teddy's subject specialisation was Technology and Enterprise, and for him the provision of certain equipment and instructional resources was essential for the implementation of the subject curriculum. On the other hand, he was enjoying the challenge of the profession and found his subject an exciting area to teach in. In view of the developments in technology he felt privileged to be teaching this subject. He stated: "technology has taken control of the world and teenagers here in our country are moving with the pace and that's why [I] as a teacher find it a challenge to cope with the pace". Therefore for Teddy, the challenge which his subject and the teaching profession presented, along with the difficulties in terms of support, contributed to his uncertainty about whether to stay or leave.

Planning to leave

Three of the teachers had been contemplating leaving teaching. This reflects a disturbing trend. Although there were only five participants and it is difficult to generalise with such a small number, this sort of picture supports the trend of teacher attrition that is described and discussed in chapter one (refer also to Appendix F). A range of factors accounted for their dispositions. All three (Mandy, Lise and Marcus) experienced increased commitment when their students were motivated to learn and were respectful towards them as teachers. Lise and Mandy valued 'learning from the kids' and they were both of the view that in teaching 'every day is a learning experience'. Marcus had taken on the position of Head of Department; he felt that this was a new challenge for him and he was enjoying the management aspect of his job. All three of these teachers commented positively on the extent to which they were supported by their family members, their friends and their colleagues. Furthermore, they all shared the belief that they had some personal qualities that helped to sustain their commitment in teaching. However, they all expressed their uncertainty as to whether these qualities and their passion for the profession will keep them in teaching.

For Mandy, she was not sure whether she would remain in public schools. She offered 'teaching in a private school' as an option she might consider in the near future, simply because she thinks 'the students are better behaved' and she will 'have a sense of security' in that type of school. The journal excerpt below shows how I tried to make sense of the frustrations I sensed Mandy was experiencing. She seemed to be wanting, but lacking, support to cope with challenges of student behaviour.

Journal entry

Today's interview has brought another dimension to my thinking. Very interesting! Mandy is so enthusiastic about the profession, but something that she expressed prompts for further reflection. She felt that maybe the challenges that she is encountering are partly because there are certain things missing in her personal competence. For example when referring to handling students' misbehaviour she noted that these are things that they were not taught in teacher training, and this gave her the feeling that she was not useful and she had doubts about what she knows. Is this pointing to a feeling of teacher deficiency of some sort? There is definitely this sense of lack of efficacy. So even if she wants to move to private school in the future it does not mean that she is not committed. This is getting really complicated.

Reflective journal, 18th November 2010

The ideas that are emerging give an indication of how complex the circumstances surrounding issues of commitment and retention can be. Leaving teaching or leaving public school, as Mandy is contemplating, does not necessarily portray a lack of commitment to teaching.

Lise was planning to leave teaching upon fulfilment of her bonding agreement, saying 'teaching is a very stressful job'. For Marcus, the decision to leave was made explicit in his statement: "Anyway I know it might be bad for you to hear that from me, but I am being frank, I think if I am offered a job tomorrow I will go. I am not happy and I am much stressed".

The main concerns for all three teachers were in relation to students' misbehaviour, 'lack of respect towards teachers' and 'their attitudes towards learning'. These were having adverse effects on their teaching skills, their classroom management and their levels of commitment. They all admitted that they were more committed when they just started their career. These teachers are considered in literature to be still at the beginning of their career and to have such short-lived commitment is a cause for concern. The two excerpts below from Mandy and Marcus respectively, illustrate the impact that the students' misbehaviour and attitudes towards their education have on these teachers:

You really really try, as much as possible to get the students to settle down and to start working, to get them interested in what you're doing. But sometimes it's just impossible, even if you try and that kind of demoralises you, because you want to help them, you feel the urge to help them, but they don't want to be helped (Mandy)

There are lots of sacrifices we have to put in the job; we have to work after hours. And when you come in the morning to deliver what you have worked so hard on to make learning more meaningful and more interesting, you find that students are not really interested. So this is a major challenge and disappointment... Sometimes I think we are fighting a losing battle (Marcus)

These perceived behaviour problems were jeopardising the pedagogical aspects of their work in terms of lesson planning, lesson delivery and variations in teaching strategies. As Mandy noted, at first she was always 'on top of things'. She has now refrained from preparing additional resources for her lessons as she feels 'it is not worth it'. She has reverted to 'traditional teaching methods' by just giving the students work to complete, because according to her 'this is what the Ministry requires' them to do. In saying that, Mandy was referring to the importance that the system puts on academic achievements rather than taking necessary action to deal with students' misbehaviour, a sentiment which was also shared by Lise and Marcus. This shows a high level of frustration and disappointment on the part of these teachers as they all felt that their sense of efficacy was at risk and they considered themselves as being undervalued by students.

The heavy workload has been emphasised as another major concern, negatively impacting on the commitment of all three participants. This was in terms of the number of classes that they were teaching, which did not allow them much time for planning and preparation of teaching aids. The amount of paper work was also a preoccupation for these teachers.

All three participants reported other aspects of the school and policy-related issues which were having adverse effects on their commitment. The leadership style of the school was noted in particular. Lise expressed her dissatisfaction with the inconsistency of leadership actions in her school, particularly in relation to students' misbehaviour. Marcus referred to the way the headteacher blamed all teachers in the morning talk' instead of 'calling the individual concerned' to the office. This for Marcus illustrated a lack of 'work ethics', which created 'discontent among staff' and left 'teachers feeling devalued'. Mandy and Lise noted the lack of instructional resources and sometimes these were what they considered 'basic resources like chalk, textbooks and photocopying facilities'. Marcus noted other environmental conditions which, in his view formed part of a 'supportive working environment'. Reference was made to such issues as, the 'overcrowded staffroom' and lack of furniture in the classrooms. Improvement in these conditions would make their workplace

a happier one. The perceived lack of support from parents was an area of concern for all three participants as Lise indicated:

...parents should be more supportive and take more interest in their children's learning instead of just coming to school to make trouble with the teacher. They should know that teachers only want the best for the students.

Having unsupportive parents as pointed out by Lise was a problem affecting students' interest in learning and also gave rise to problems of safety and security in the school, which Mandy mentioned. This was an issue raised earlier by John. The two main policy issues which perturbed these three teachers were the Code of Conduct and the training policy. The new Code of Conduct which the Ministry of Education had introduced in schools as a way of dealing with behaviour problem failed to impress these teachers. They felt that it was ineffective and was putting more pressure on teachers instead of helping to alleviate behaviour problems. Similarly to John, Mandy and Lise noted that the lack of further training was a de-motivating factor for newly qualified teachers holding a Diploma like them.

There were contrasting views on the issue of salary. Mandy cited that the salary for newly qualified teachers is reasonably high compared to other professions and according to her this was one reason why some NQT remained in teaching. But, Lise claimed the salary 'does not reflect the nature of the job'. In relation to the earlier comment on salary, this statement implies that salary is a motivation, and while not explicitly stated as a reason for joining the profession, it was a reason for choosing to leave. However, it appeared that the issue was not just about the amount of the salary, but rather that the salary did not compensate for the extent of the difficulties that the job entailed. Along with this was the view that teachers are undervalued and unrecognised, pertaining to the perceived low status of teaching.

Another concern for Marcus was the perceived lack of support for beginning teachers because of the absence of an established induction programme. This may have been more of an issue for Marcus since his Head of Department role gave him a broader perspective of the school environment and the education system in general. The attitudes of other teachers had contributed to Marcus's decline in commitment, specifically their daily tasks of teaching and respect for him as HOD. According to Marcus, being a young HOD had brought about certain communication problems, particularly with the 'more experienced teachers in the department'.

It is likely that all three participants who were wanting to leave the profession had high expectations and that they were now disillusioned because it was difficult for them to reconcile their beliefs about what teaching should be about and their real life experiences of teaching in schools. As a result these new teachers were experiencing ‘reality shock’ as they try to come to terms with the challenges of their new role.

Summary and links to literature

This first stage of a teacher’s career is commonly referred to in literature as being the most crucial, particularly in view of the problem of retention of beginning teachers in the profession (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This was also evident for the newly qualified teachers in the context of this study, who presented the complexity of their challenges and satisfaction as they experienced the realities of the profession. For teachers in this case, the findings show a degree of vulnerability, and their preoccupations were around the question of whether to remain in teaching or leave. The findings for this particular group of teachers show some similarities with previous studies on career stages and on beginning teachers in particular, while also showing some specific differences relating to the particular context of the study. John in the current study, who was being supported and had established a good relationship with his students, can be aligned with Huberman’s (1989) ‘easy beginning’ as well as Day et al.’s (2007) subgroup of ‘developing sense of efficacy’. Four of the teachers in this cohort can be associated with Huberman’s (1989) ‘painful beginnings’. They displayed a level of instability similar to the teachers in Sikes et al.’s (1985) study. They were trying to find the balance between handling students’ misbehaviour and curriculum delivery and support, thus displaying a ‘reduced sense of efficacy’ (Day et al., 2007). Teddy was also trying to find the balance between the theory learnt in teacher education programme and the realities of the classroom (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Fessler & Christensen, 1992). This was not easy according to him, particularly in the absence of an induction programme for NQTs. The assumption of school leaders that the newly qualified teachers have the ‘basic knowledge and skills to handle all duties required of them’ also emerged from Flores’ (2006) study of novice teachers in Portugal. Marcus, also noted the adverse effect of inadequate induction on his experience as a new teacher. This was why he had taken the initiative to support the new teachers in his department by holding one-to-one meetings with them and trying to provide the support that he himself did not receive as a new teacher.

There are some particular observations for this group of beginning teachers which are specific to the context of Seychelles. For example, teachers taking on leadership responsibilities at this early stage in their career are not usually reported in studies of beginning teachers, but rather appear in studies of mid-career teachers. In the local context this could be a result of teacher shortage, particularly in certain subject areas, or it could also be a strategy for retention of beginning teachers, especially when the Ministry has invested in their training. Another particularity for Seychelles is the element of further training for this case of teachers. As outlined in Chapter One, with the absence of a university in Seychelles, for the past three decades up to 2009, graduates from the local Secondary Diploma course were sent overseas after one year of teaching to do a Bachelor of Education Degree. This changed with the setting up of the University of Seychelles in 2010. In this transition process, the newly qualified teachers who graduated from the National Institute of Education from 2008 onwards have been in the schools without an opportunity for training to obtain further qualifications. This is having an adverse effect on those NQTs as they have not been made aware of what the plan is for their ongoing teacher education and development. Training of teachers is centrally coordinated and financed, so teachers have been expecting this to happen as has previously been the case. As it is, if they get other opportunities in the labour market with possibilities of career advancement, then they are more likely to leave.

In general there appears from the data to be a disjunction between those beginning teachers' own experiences and expectations as students, (not recent school leavers themselves) and the reality being experienced in their new roles. These have been clearly illustrated through the views provided by John, who said: "I thought that it would be like when I was at school, where students were willing to learn...but it's different... students are disturbing the class". This sentiment was also shared by others. Although these teachers expected challenges, the extent of that was 'sometimes...very farfetched from what we reasoned' (Mandy). Likewise, making a difference was important to Marcus, but once he started as a teacher he was unable to deliver his lessons as planned in view of students' lack of interest in learning. The status of teaching was another disappointment for most of the participants, who claimed that teaching had changed a lot and that the amount of effort and the sacrifices that they put in as teachers were undervalued. What these teachers had in common was a sense of disillusion and reality shock which influenced their commitment, sense of efficacy and future career plans.

Case 2: Mid-career teachers: Thriving or surviving

The five teachers in this case have between five to nine years of teaching experience, so they are just outside of the bond period, which means they are able to leave teaching without financial penalty. Table 5 (below) provides a reminder of the profiles of the participants in this case.

Table 5: Profile of Case 2 participants

Name	Gender	Teaching Experience	Qualification	Subject
Elai	F	5 years	BEd	Social Science
Jennifer	F	7 years	Diploma	ICT
Steve	M	5 years	BEd	Art
Elaine	F	5 years	BEd	English
Rene	M	9 years	Diploma	Art

In the context of my study this mid-career stage is characterised by teachers who are either thriving as they have taken on new roles and responsibilities, or surviving as they think about their future career plans. It is also a stage where those teachers start having extra personal responsibilities mainly in terms of family commitment or involvement in activities outside the school. Therefore, in many ways the mid-career stage could be viewed as a particular turning point because of life circumstances. Three out of the five teachers in this case had been assigned to new roles. Elai and Elaine were both in middle management as HODs in their respective subjects, while Jennifer had the opportunity to shift to the new Information Technology subject which she was leading for her school. Both Elai and Elaine were positive about their new roles and the responsibilities that came with them. However, Elai stepped down from the role for six months for two reasons, mainly child bearing and being unhappy with the school's leadership style. She requested a transfer to a new school, where she was re-appointed HOD and she was now 'much happier in this school'. She is an example of a teacher who was not willing to leave the profession altogether but instead took a proactive move in seeking a transfer, in the hope that another school would better suit her needs. Both Elai and Elaine took pride in their leadership responsibilities which gave them the opportunity to assist new teachers and to be of more help to other teachers in the department, a factor that is particular to this group of teachers. This moving beyond self was a feature of the mid-career phase.

With the introduction of ICT as a new curriculum area a number of teachers opted to take on this new responsibility. Jennifer was interested in ICT and she had been teaching a few classes when it was still part of the old vocational subject area. The shift has made her happier, mainly because of new challenges that the subject presented and because of the comfort of the computer lab with the available equipment. She was able to avoid being on a comfortable plateau because she could alter her job scope. This made her commitment to the profession stronger at this point in her career.

Like the newly qualified teacher case, three broad trajectories have been identified for teachers in this cohort relating to their retention and change of focus or role within teaching. Two of the teachers expressed their desire to stay on while two participants expressed some uncertainty regarding their decisions and one participant was planning to leave within the next five years. The graph in Figure 11 (below) illustrates the trajectories of this cohort of mid-career teachers.

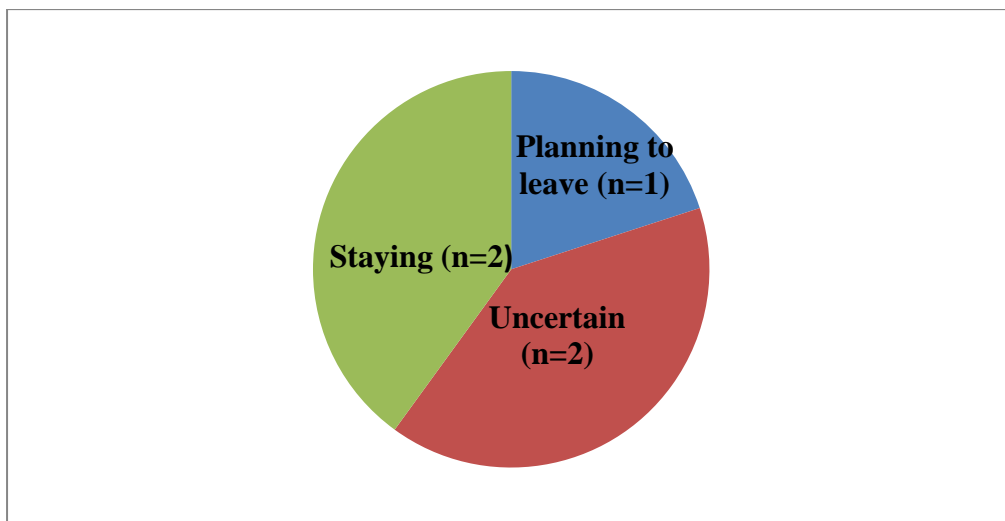


Figure 11: Case 2 participants' trajectories

Staying

Both Elai and Jennifer from this case who were not planning to leave, expressed their satisfaction with their current tasks of teaching and leading their subjects. They both felt that they were striving as they were experiencing professional growth and they believed that they had developed skills and abilities which were helping them to cope. Professional growth however, was different for each of the two teachers. For Elai it was mainly in terms of the experience that she was gaining in her management tasks, while for Jennifer it was in terms of professional learning and development in her new subject area. Both teachers were

encouraged by those students who displayed enthusiasm for learning and produced good results. Elai stated:

...good about teaching is when you see some students out there who still need some help, who want our help, who are eager to learn more. And now with the IGCSE in schools now, we have a little bit of challenge, we look forward to the results.

So for Elai, the sense of altruism which was expressed in her motivation to teach was also manifested in her daily tasks. For her attending to the needs of the students was a joy. This was coupled with the challenge that the introduction of IGCSE brought, both in terms of students' achievements and as an evaluation of her own performance. Similar sentiments were expressed by Jennifer.

There was a subtle variation in the way the two teachers justified their intentions to remain in teaching. For Elai there was a combination of factors involved, but central to that was her identity as a teacher and she elaborated:

I'm not intending to change my profession right now, because, like I'm telling you, I love teaching, despite all the problems, I still think I can...I can cope...I have this within me, I don't see myself doing something else, I see myself being a teacher.

This response suggests an understanding of herself as the person in the profession and the perception that teaching defined who she was. On the other hand it also underpins Elai's realisation of the context within which she was working and all the challenges that the daily tasks of teaching presented.

On the other hand, Jennifer, who had taken a different path into teaching, felt that she had now found her place in the teaching profession, so she was not planning to leave. She acknowledged:

I have been tempted to change profession. To remain in the IT section but doing another business also. I have thought about it a lot. I thought of going to University for a break. But now I have a child. She is still young and I don't want to go through that hassle. So I feel that teaching is what I do best... I've been through jobs, and I think I've found what I want to do...So I don't think I would be leaving the teaching profession. Not yet anyway. I feel comfortable in teaching.

As she had a child, the flexibility that a career in teaching afforded suited her family life. Therefore her personal life stage revolving around her family circumstances was likely to

have had an impact on her decision to remain in teaching. Additionally, her new responsibility in ICT for her school gave her new challenges as she had to prepare the first group of secondary students in her school for the international examination in ICT.

Similar to the NQTs from the previous case study, one of the factors that worried teachers in this case was the perceived students' misbehaviour and lack of interest in their education. Similar to Marcus from case one, both Elai and Jennifer pointed to the new Code of Conduct, which they too considered ineffective. The following excerpt from Elai's interview captures the frustrations which have arisen with the introduction of this new policy:

For example the behaviour of students....now we have the new reform, we were expecting things to be working, and...we were expecting a better policy concerning behaviour, but when we came it was more paper work for us. You have to fill in form after form... I think after six offences...something is being done about it. So people are frustrated with the paperwork, so this new behaviour policy has added more paperwork for us, but there are few things we can do at school for the misbehaviour and it is really frustrating...

The frustration of teachers is seen through the amount of paper work involved in dealing with misbehaviour and the lack of autonomy by both teachers and schools in handling issues of misbehaviour. Therefore, as Elai pointed out, to avoid the hassle of filling in all the forms required, teachers in general opt not to tackle misbehaviour, and this aggravates the situation. Associated with the problem of misbehaviour and lack of motivation to learn was the issue of parental support. It was noted that parents were not taking their responsibilities and as a result 'teachers were faced with extra responsibilities' which gave the impression that teachers were seen as 'babysitters'. Elai particularly believed that teachers, and schools for that matter, were not getting the support of the system in tackling difficult parents. On the contrary, according to her, the Ministry seemed to take the side of parents and students over the teachers. This demeaned teachers' authority leaving them feeling that they were not respected and appreciated.

Similarly, teachers' workload was an issue of concern for this case, but this was addressed differently from the newly qualified teachers' experience of it. For example, in Elai's position, the shortage of teachers or teacher absences was causing additional pressure for her as HOD when preparing cover timetables for her department, and in most cases she also had to cover for classes without teachers. This did not leave her much time to attend to other

duties, particularly to provide support to other teachers in her department as she would have liked. She pointed out:

There's no time. If you have none – [then] teaching time you have other things to do. Sometimes you have to go and replace those ones who are absent. For example, if you have one absent in your department you have to organise to cover within the department, ok? So again it's a problem, the covering of teachers who are not here and most of the time we are not fully staffed....so there's no time for planning.

For Jennifer, also, teacher absences resulted in her either covering those classes or taking additional students into her class. The latter impacted negatively on her lesson delivery (particularly in ICT where the number of computers available for the number of students would be an issue), and delayed the coverage of what she initially planned for her students. The problem of coverage for teacher shortage or teacher absence is specific to the context of Seychelles. Within a highly centralised system, the Ministry of Education has the sole responsibility for recruitment of teachers and there is no provision for relief or part-time teachers, this is unlike the situation in developed nations, where there are often systems in place to provide relief teachers. Workload was also noted in terms of class size as Elai explained in the following statement:

...we have classes with 40 students, some around 38. Most of our classes here are above 30. And we've got only one teacher to cater for all the abilities of that over 30 students. It's a lot ...it's a lot.

The class size and the need to cater for mixed-ability classes put additional pressure on teachers and have a negative impact on their planning, delivery and marking of students' work. Such situations contributed to students' misbehaviour and presented constraints for teachers when it came to varying teaching strategies or providing follow-up for students who needed additional help.

Instructional resources and the adequacy of facilities were among the issues of concern as they had been for the previous group of teachers. These were seen as contributing to a decline in commitment. For Jennifer this was mainly in terms of technical assistance for computers and problems with the server, which could go on for weeks without solution, but also in terms of the absence of ICT reference books in the school.

From Elai's perspective the resource problem was illustrated in the following excerpt:

For example, some teachers have been complaining about the chalk for a long time. I know we form part of the developing nations, but we need to move on. For example, if we get the budget like now, instead of spending it on photocopies, nowadays all teachers have their laptops; why not invest in LCD projectors instead. This will cut down a bit on the chalk we use. Because some teachers are very allergic to chalk, like myself, I now have sinus problem. Or they can have white board instead.

This is indicative of a practical frustration in terms of budget and resources/supplies, but it is also aspirational – needing to “move on” and aspire to what developed nations are doing with ICT. The concerns being expressed here reflect both an economic imperative in terms of the necessity for the system to prioritise the expenditure based on the needs of the schools, and also a policy position regarding resources through maximising the investments already made, like the provision of laptops for teachers.

There were other policy related concerns which were raised by Elai. One example was the view that the prescribed national curriculum does not allow for diversity of instruction, which made it difficult for all students to follow. Elai was referring mainly to the academic curriculum, where all students have to follow one programme, such as the IGCSE curriculum, even if they were not eligible to sit for those international examinations. The implication of this is that it could possibly contribute to the students' lack of desire to learn, because those students were unable to see the relevance of these programmes for them. It may also present difficulties for teachers in catering for the learning needs of students.

The concern of a lack of professional development for teachers was expressed by Elai, who felt that it sometimes results in the impression of ‘being stuck’. Although there is a structure in place for professional development sessions on a weekly basis, this is seen by teachers as being ineffective. The reason that is provided for this ineffectiveness is the timing of these sessions, which is usually at the end of a working day when most teachers are ‘too exhausted to follow’. The absence of structured and accredited professional development for teachers to ‘upgrade their content knowledge and skills’ is seen as a major gap in teachers' professional growth. For Jennifer however, there were opportunities for professional development because of the particular subject area being a relatively new addition to the national curriculum strand.

Jennifer and Elai highlighted a number of constraints and challenges that they were encountering in their daily tasks of teaching. They also acknowledged that these difficulties sometimes make them feel de-motivated. However, their inner selves, their goals for their students' success and their circumstances contributed to their sustained commitment and influenced their decision to remain in the profession. They were hopeful that things would improve.

Uncertain

Both Steve and Elaine were uncertain about their intentions to remain in teaching. Although Elaine felt that she enjoyed 'the challenge' both for herself and 'in passing on to the students' she considered herself a survivor. According to her:

I've matured over the years, in terms of the job itself, I've learnt a lot about teaching students, their behaviour, and it has helped me really to cope with whatever difficulties which come my way.

For Steve, the driving force for his sustained commitment was the love for his subject. Steve asserted that his commitment was still high as evident in the following words:

I'm very motivated; I wake up every morning to come to school. It is a very difficult place to be, especially this school. The community is a little bit challenging, but I do come to work early. I do go out of my way to get things done...I feel like I can do more but for the subject. It is mainly for the subject.

Having this passion for the subject had deep significance for Steve, because through art students can express themselves, thus allowing him to get through to the students. This satisfaction was complemented with the various opportunities that the subject presented in terms of competitions or other activities which helped to portray the talents and achievements of students.

However, similar to other participants in this case the issue of students' misbehaviour was placed as the number one difficulty for both Steve and Elaine. In emphasising 'behavioural problems' as being 'the main concern' Elaine cited the Code of Conduct, which other teachers mentioned, while Steve referred to 'the red tape that you have to go through to get things done', which made him 'feel stuck at times'. This indication of frustration was relative to administrative demands as well as actions to address student's misbehaviour. The inadequacy of instructional resources was also highlighted by both teachers with different

emphasis. For Steve, it was more to do with his subject, while for Elaine this concern extended to her responsibilities as HOD.

Both teachers expressed dissatisfaction with other things like the level of support from the school leadership, parents and the Ministry. They talked with apprehension about the number of things that they had to deal with as teachers, which interfered with their teaching time. This was compounded by the perceived heavy workload, and all these factors were impacting negatively on their commitment. The concern for teacher safety was also an influential factor for Elaine, as she noted that ‘teachers’ safety is a big problem’ and she referred to incidents where people had come into the school premises to threaten teachers. All of these considerations contributed to a sense of unease about their long term commitment to teaching.

However, their ambivalence about whether to remain in or leave teaching was expressed differently. Elaine described her sentiment as follows:

...you know, you will think, ok, I can teach, I love this job, but loving it these days is not enough. You can love something, but when there isn’t anything to keep this love growing, you just grow out of love.... I don’t want to stay in teaching for so many more years. I want to do something different, because of all the reasons that I mentioned, maybe it’s triggering me to move into something else.

So, for Elaine, despite her acknowledged passion for the profession, the factors mentioned above were impacting on her professional life and were likely to influence her decision to stay or leave. She indicated that she thought she would be more likely to leave rather than remain in teaching. On the other hand, Steve’s uncertainty about his future career plans was described in his statement: “I’m not sure. Teaching was not my first choice...I’m doing some art things in my spare time and if I succeed I might leave.” This shows that the decision to leave was not all about teaching, but also about what other opportunities might be presented, a degree of serendipity is thus reflected in Steve’s situation. The love for the subject and the difficulties being encountered, along with the likelihood of new business opening for Steve, were the factors at play when it came to his decision to stay in or leave teaching.

Planning to leave

Only one participant in this cohort expressed deliberate plans to leave in the next five years. Rene entered teaching through the ‘long path’ as referred to by Nieto (2005) and he had been

teaching for nine years at the time of the interview. Similar to other participants in this group, Rene enjoyed working with children and he was positive about his relationship with his colleagues. However, Rene was frustrated with a number of policy issues such as disciplinary and training policies, as well as some school related factors such as resources. Despite the number of years of experience, Rene had not been given an opportunity for further training or professional development in his subject area or pedagogical skills. He felt somewhat stagnant in relation to his professional growth and had the impression that his subject was considered inferior by the authorities because it was not an academic area. The following excerpt encapsulates Rene's sentiments:

...the lack of resources, the teaching environment, lack of firm disciplinary policy in schools which contributes to major disciplinary problems and also the lack of training, as well as some useless paper work or duplication of record keeping are the things that lower my commitment

In commenting on his future career plan, Rene admitted that despite all the difficulties in teaching, there were some satisfaction deep down, particularly in terms of what he contributed towards the lives of the students which have a lifetime impact on them. This gave a sense of achievement for him, but as he stated "...nonetheless, the situation in our school is really deteriorating and I cannot see myself still doing that job five years from now". This sense of survival is evident in Rene's circumstances and if he finds something better out there he is very likely to leave.

Summary and links to literature

The mid-career teachers in this study have shown some specific characteristics for this stage of the profession in the context of Seychelles. Most of these teachers were striving as some have taken on new roles, either leadership roles or new assignments. They demonstrated deeper knowledge of the education system and they were in a position to reflect on policy issues which impact on the work of teachers in general. They were concerned about their professional identities as teachers and their sense of efficacy in their tasks, as they saw themselves guiding others. However, some of them also felt the need for career advancement, which according to them, the system was not providing. Others had started their families and they saw themselves finding the balance between their work and life circumstances. Compared to case 1, this group of teachers was less likely to leave the profession. However, this finding relates to this specific group of participants, and because of the qualitative nature of the research and the small sample size in each case, broad conclusions cannot be drawn.

What is evident, though, is that many of the factors that influenced commitment of the NQT group were also important for this group, but that they also expressed different concerns, or placed different emphasis on some factors.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the stage of mid-career teachers has been characterised differently in previous research (see for example, Berliner, 1994; Day et al., 2007; Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Hargreaves, 2005; Huberman, 1989; Sikes et al., 1985). The findings from this case of teachers in this study show some consistency with previous studies, although these do not entirely correspond to the same points in the profession. For example, the mid-career teachers in Sikes (1985) study were in two phases; phase 2 was the 28-33 age group – ‘the age thirty transition’, and phase 3 was the 30-40 age group – ‘the settling down period’. With new developments in career paths in the education context worldwide, I suggest that defining career stages by age group may no longer be relevant as a number of people enter the teaching profession after experiencing different jobs. However, while the teachers in my study were not necessarily in the same age groups, they shared some of the characteristics of the two groups defined by Sikes, particularly in terms of family commitment, which was apparent for participants like Elai and Jennifer. Four out of the five teachers in this case were striving to improve their teaching skills and have taken on new challenges or promotion. Those who were successful in building this competency and were given opportunities to develop were likely to experience stabilisation in their careers (Huberman, 1993) leading to professional growth and enthusiasm (Fessler & Christensen, 1992). Others who felt an absence of opportunities for professional growth could experience frustration which was likely to push them to leave, as in the case of Rene. The paucity of professional development can have conflicting effect on those who are striving as well. Despite her promotion to a leadership role, Elai felt stagnant because of a lack of opportunity to enrich her knowledge and skills. This may be particular to the context of Seychelles as a developing nation, where opportunities for conferences or other accredited training are scarce, which explains Elai’s view that, ‘there is no challenge’. Hence, the findings for this case of teachers reveal the five to ten year career stage to be both a critical and a complex stage.

According to the findings, three of the teachers in this group were thriving in different ways. For Elai, the thriving was evident in her work to support and lead others. As a teacher leader she could reflect on and anticipate changes that she thought could strengthen and improve the system. Jennifer was thriving in her increasing professional knowledge of her new subject,

and Steve was thriving because of his innovative practice in promoting a love of his subject. On the other hand, Elaine's survival could be attributed to her sense of efficacy and planned considerations of her next steps. Similarly Rene considered himself to be surviving despite a decrease in his enthusiasm in view of the lack of professional development.

Case 3: Experienced teachers: Resilience or stagnation

The six experienced teachers in this cohort have been teaching for a period of more than eleven years (from 12 to 24 years) as indicated in the Table 6 below.

Table 6: Profiles of Case 3 participants

Name	Gender	Teaching Experience	Qualification	Subject
Neil	M	24 years	Licence	French
May	F	21 years	Diploma	Personal and Social Education
Eva	F	13 years	BEd	Science
Sam	M	12 years	BA+PGCE	Mathematics
Clement	M	17 years	BA+PGCE	Science
Henry	M	20 years	BEd	ICT

Trajectories

Teachers in this case in general felt that they were at ease with their daily tasks and what teaching entailed. They have mastered their subjects and taken pride in their achievements thus far, particularly when seeing the achievements of former students. Two main trajectories have been identified among these teachers namely: staying on in teaching and uncertainty. The graph in Figure 12 (below) show the number of participants for the two trajectories.

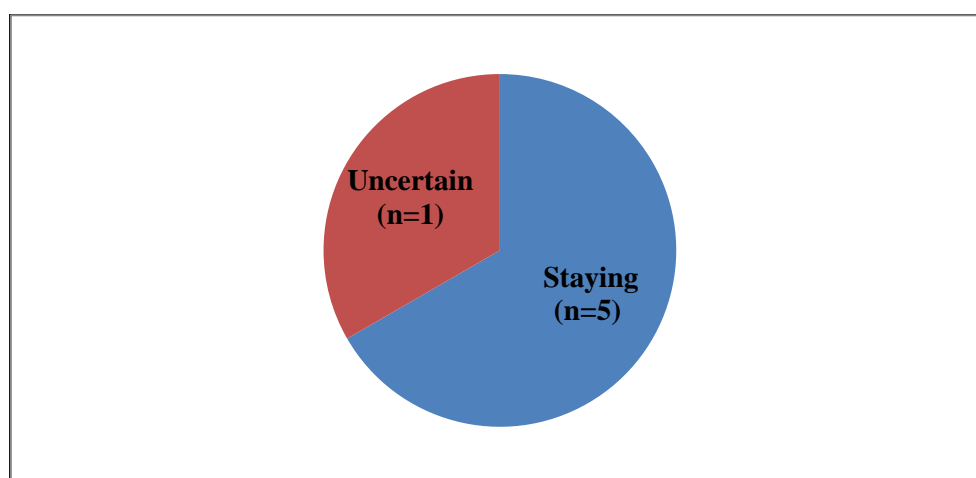


Figure 12: Trajectories of case 3 participants

Stayers

Four teachers in this case had no intentions of leaving teaching for other jobs and the reasons that they provided were not always similar. Their sustained commitment was attributed to their pride and sense of success about their students' achievements, and these achievements were not solely subject related. For example, May referred to the importance of the 'holistic development of the child[ren]' in her care to enable them to become responsible and successful citizens. Supporting this line of thought Clement added, "when your students are doing well in school and later on in life, it makes you feel good". Neil also made reference to the respect that he gets from past students who have done well, and the feeling that he had contributed towards their success gave him pride and joy. He maintained his belief that he can make a difference. On the other hand, Henry saw how teaching had helped him to progress in his professional life, particularly now that he had changed from vocational teaching to ICT and had been appointed HOD, so he felt that there were opportunities for continuous professional development with such a subject.

All four teachers, however, expressed their worries with regards to the deterioration in students' behaviour. In most cases these teachers compared the current situation to the time when they had started teaching remembering they 'had the respect that teachers deserved'. Similar to participants in other cases, these four teachers felt very strongly about the impact of students' behaviour on their sense of efficacy. Such emotions made them question their very roles as teachers 'if [they] cannot achieve' what they set out to do. However, they also noted that these problems were sometimes beyond the control of schools, as Neil signalled in the following excerpt:

...when I look at it, those students who are giving problems at school, they are not necessarily bad students; they have social problems at home most of the time. There are so many social ills in the country that when those students come to school they are disturbed maybe. They are thinking of the problem at home, maybe they misbehave; they try to get help, to get the teacher's attention. And we do not have even a school counsellor to deal with these issues.

Such a sentiment was shared by others. This was made more complex with the perceived lack of parental support. Such concerns were similar to those espoused by teachers in case study two. Another source of frustration for those teachers was the number of absences by teachers, resulting in others having to cover, as mentioned by teachers in the previous group. There was mention of the importance of a school leadership style which is more 'humane' towards

teachers as it was felt that the ‘emotional support was not there’. Dissatisfaction with resources was noted by most teachers, and this was both instructional and physical. This was captured by Neil who elucidated:

...shortage of resources is a big problem, like books, CD players ...and the dilapidated state of classrooms, no doors, no windows...if it rains you have to get the students to move to one side. And if you are giving an assessment you have to suddenly pick up all the papers and postpone the assessment...sometimes students have to stand throughout the duration of the lesson...this is a sorry state of affairs.

This put teachers in awkward situations as they had no solutions. There was also a general observation that there was not enough support from the Ministry. In addition to resources there were other issues like salary, the ways in which problems were dealt with and the way that they felt teachers were ‘devalued’. These teachers also contended that there was ‘no teacher input’ in decisions for new policies. Furthermore, it was perceived that there were ‘too many changes too often’ and that they lost track of them. Indicative of these views were the statements that ‘a lot of pressure is put on teachers’, and ‘when things go wrong teachers are blamed’.

Despite these difficulties, these four teachers still believed that they could make a difference. Their determination and perceived personal qualities helped them to remain in teaching. The strength of this determination was illustrated in Henry’s statement when he said, “I am determined to overcome them [these challenges]”.

Uncertain

Two of the teachers in this case expressed uncertainty about their future career plans. Sam, who was occupying the post of HOD in his subject area, felt that he was being supported by the school leadership team; however, similar to other participants within this cohort, he was not happy with students’ behaviour, the provision of resources by the Ministry and the level of support from parents. These, along with the shortage of teachers which was creating excessive workload for himself and teachers within his department, were impacting negatively on his commitment. Similarly, Eva elucidated the problem of workload in relation to shortage of teachers or covering for absent teachers, concerns which were raised by mid-career teachers. Both Eva and Sam felt that if they had a better job offer they would leave teaching. For Eva there was a feeling of being trapped and she indicated other teachers with

her level of experience felt the same, 'they are just there because they don't have anywhere else to go'. Eva also mentioned her deteriorating health condition as a result of chalk use.

Summary and links to literature

The experienced teachers in this study displayed different emphases than in other studies. None of the participants made reference to their approaching retirement, which has been commonly referred to in previous research (Day et al., 2007; Huberman, 1993; Sikes et al., 1985). However, this might be a result of the small number of participants in my study as compared to other studies. It could also be due to the number of years of experience, which was different to those in previous studies. For example, veteran teachers in Day et al's., (2007) study had more than 31 years of experience, whereas experienced teachers in my study had between 12 and 24 years of teaching experience. On the other hand it could also indicate a paucity of research on experienced teachers in general. The majority of experienced teachers in this case displayed high levels of commitment despite their perceived constraints.

The two main identifiable features of this group of teachers were resilience and stagnation. Most of the teachers displayed their sustained commitment through their determination to persevere despite the difficulties and challenges, over which they had no control in most circumstances. For some, it was also the belief that they could still make a difference in the lives of their students, their communities and their country. This could be related to their past successes. They mentioned taking pride in seeing achievements of their past students, so this likely keeps them going. Others, even those thinking about leaving displayed some measure of resilience in the face of challenges, as was the case with Sam. On the other hand, one participant in particular displayed stagnation and gave the impression of being trapped. The absence of professional development and new challenges led to a feeling of not growing professionally. There are similarities between the factors expressed by this group and those from previous cases. The most commonly mentioned factors are students' behaviour and attitude towards learning, lack of parental and community support, workload and lack of systemic support. These factors are somewhat contrary to those identified in McIntyre's (2010a) study among twenty long-serving teachers of inner-city schools in the UK. The teachers in his study identified their source of commitment through their knowledge of their community and the support that they get from parents, something that has been identified as lacking in my study.

Case 4: Exit teachers: Why they left

Table 7 (below) provides a profile of participants in case four. Within this case of exit teachers there were two teachers (Rana and Joel) who had left teaching in the state system within their first two years of teaching. One teacher (Charles) who had left after five years; and two teachers (Tyler and Elvira) who had left after spending more than twelve years in teaching.

Table 7: Profiles of Case 4 participants

Name	Gender	Teaching Experience	Qualification	Subject
Rana	F	1½ years	Licence	French
Joel	M	9 months	Diploma	Science
Charles	M	5 years	BEd	Mathematics
Tyler	M	12 years	BEd	Science
Elvira	F	17 years	Diploma	English

Four of those teachers were occupying other jobs outside of education, whereas one moved from state to private school and was planning to travel overseas to teach.

Reasons for leaving

The reasons that influence teachers to leave the profession at different points are sometimes straightforward, but they can also be very complex. For my participants these reasons were due to changes in personal life circumstances of the individual, profession related or a combination of factors. A number of the reasons for diminishing commitment mentioned by this group reflected the factors identified in the other groups. These have been grouped into seven different themes: students' behaviour and attitudes, salary, professional development and career advancement, workload, leadership, policies and personal factors. However, some of these factors are interconnected as one can influence the other. These are discussed below through the interview data.

Students' behaviour and attitudes

Similar to the other teacher groups, frequent mention was made of students' misbehaviour and lack of motivation to learn. All of the five participants in this group pointed to behaviour problems as being one of the major reasons for leaving, but this was also connected to a range

of other issues. For example, Rana and Joel, who were both in their early years of teaching, found that ‘students’ misbehaviour and lack of respect towards teachers’ had become a source of frustration. As expressed by Rana, the “deteriorating disciplinary problems...which just kept increasing...and the students, they just didn’t listen.” This was a sentiment which was shared by most of the other participants including those who indicated that they would consider leaving.

A nuance in the issue of misbehaviour was highlighted by Tyler, who had been teaching for twelve years. He emphasised that his main reasons for leaving were also the students’ misbehaviour, their lack of respect and their lack of motivation to learn. To explain this he referred to the current policy for recruitment into post-secondary institutions, including teacher education (refer to Chapter One for details of recruitment procedures into post-secondary institutions). In Tyler’s view, ‘students do not have the desire to learn’, because they know that even if they get a low grade at the end of their secondary education their entry into a ‘post-secondary institution is practically automatic’. So even if the student had been behaving badly, he or she still gets away with it without any consequences. He suggested this had implications for parents, who might also think the teacher should not put any pressure on their children to learn, because as they look back they see past students, who were not performing and still got into a post-secondary institution. According to him:

...we are letting the students get away with all the wrong things in life.
Tomorrow you will get adults who are not responsible, not visionary and
who have no ambitions in their lives.

So Tyler expressed his worry for the future of our country if this attitude persists. In saying that, he noted that he is not against recruitment of these students, but that there should be a system in place to ensure that these students re-sit their exams where necessary so that they meet the established criteria for entry, rather than lowering the criteria to allow them to get in, which is sending the wrong message.

On the other hand for Joel, the issue of students’ misbehaviour and the way these problems were dealt with caused further dissatisfaction, as he explained in the following statement:

If you want action to be taken against a student for misbehaviour, the student will simply be sent back to the class without any penalties. So teachers lose interest, and they will start teaching just for the sake of teaching.

The assumption being made by Joel may be attributed to a lack of autonomy to handle such issues, the lack of appropriate action and follow-up by the headteacher, or even a lack of support on such issues by the Ministry, because according to Joel this is the ‘result of a system failure as headteachers take orders from the Ministry’.

Leadership

The lack of leadership support, particularly in relation to misbehaviour, was the main reason that Elvira left. This was also common from the other teacher groups; however, it has been exemplified by participants in this case, thus showing other aspects of the extent of the concerns. Elvira felt that there was no support for teachers from the school leadership and from the Ministry when it came to actions to deal with students’ misbehaviour. Elaborating on school leadership, Elvira also reiterated the ethical issue noted by Marcus in case one, where the headteacher addresses issues publicly instead of calling the individual teacher to the office. This very often resulted in teachers feeling devalued because of ‘lack of confidentiality’, and according to her it very often ‘spoils teachers’ daily routine’. For others in the group there were personal conflicts which resulted in their resignations, as evident in the case of Rana. She was the professional development facilitator (PDF) in her school, but was not happy with the way problems were dealt with by the headteacher. According to her, the issues that she as the PDF brought forward were not acted upon; this made her unhappy and undermined her position in the eyes of other teachers. Similarly to Rana, Tyler pointed to the lack of support from school leadership, mostly in relation to students’ issues. He was not happy in the school where he was teaching, because of a perceived lack of leadership support and cooperation. He was of the view that ‘the school leader was not ready to listen, but was always ‘pointing finger at teachers’ and this was a major source of the decline in his commitment.

Joel also complained about the lack of support from the leadership team of his school, particularly in dealing with misbehaviour and he illustrated this in the following excerpt:

You would send a student to them and they send him/her back to your class. And I would have a student who behaves rudely towards me, who does not respect me, so at some point I was refusing to accept those types of students, and management would insist saying that they need to do their science and so on. But I just could not accept this kind of attitude, so I feel that I did not have the support of the management

Further to this view was the perception that ‘there are things that you discuss in meetings, but then nothing is done about them’ and this lack of action or follow-up ‘is frustrating’. The

reaction of the school leadership on issues pertaining to misbehaviour was a problem for Joel, but according to him it was the ‘result of a system failure as headteachers take orders from the Ministry’. Therefore, his frustration was more towards the system than towards the school’s leadership.

Elvira, who was also a HOD before she left, voiced her dissatisfaction with her school leadership. She considered that they were ‘too judgemental and offered limited mentorship’, ‘always ready to criticise’ instead of helping teachers in difficult situations and offering alternatives.

Policy issues

A number of systemic issues emerged and some of these were similar to those from other teacher groups. One of the main sources of disappointment was in relation to the new Code of Conduct, which was the driving force for Charles’ resignation. He noted that the introduction of the new Code of Conduct by the Ministry “was neither the time, nor the manner to tackle such a sensitive and most important factor that was affecting the schools overall.” His disappointment also reflected the lack of input into the matter by teachers, which made him feel that teachers’ views were not important. This policy, which was raised earlier in previous cases, was also commented on by Rana, who was of the view that ‘it was not working’. It was also pointed out that this policy was piloted in the schools and ‘it did not work’, but it was still sent to schools for implementation.

This sentiment was echoed by all the other participants in this group. There was the assumption that ‘policymakers impose too many reforms’ on schools without consideration of the needs of schools. Further to this view, Charles believed that ‘there was no feedback or real interaction with ministry officials’ governing the implementation of policies, which according to him, was because ‘these rules are not realistic’ at times.

In addition Elvira observed that ‘the Ministry often washed their hands of the difficulties that teachers are facing in schools’ and this had adverse effects on teachers’ commitment. Examples of such cases were given by participants, particularly in respect to students’ misbehaviour. In relation to this Elvira said that because misbehaviour was seen as a national concern, the Ministry should ‘seek help and support from other agencies’ and also ensure that ‘there is a counsellor in schools’.

Salary

One other reason which emerged was the issue of salary. As discussed in the previous section, there were contrasting views on the issue of salary. For some it was one of the reasons for diminishing commitment, while for others it was the contrary. For Charles in this group, it was one of the reasons for his resignation. He noted that ‘despite the improvement in the scheme of service’, it was still lower than in many other jobs, taking into account the nature of the tasks involved. On the other hand, for Tyler money was not the issue, as he elaborated:

Money is not the problem for teachers. You can give SR 25,000.00 if you want, to me it is big money, but if I am not getting half worth back from the students, why am I getting 25,000.00 from the Government? If you’re going to give money for the job, I need to be doing money worth job... Most teachers who are leaving the profession these days, their first reason is behaviour and the second is support from the management or from the Ministry.

The sentiment being expressed here is in relation to a teacher’s sense of efficacy, the lack of which may diminish commitment and lead teachers to quit. This was made explicit in Rana’s statement:

Even if they reviewed the scheme of service, it did not make me change my mind, because I left right after the raise. I am still bonded, but I couldn’t stay, I was too unhappy.

Thus, it affirms the view that salary is not necessarily the reason that teachers leave, because even while there has been a change in the Teachers’ Scheme of Service (TSS), the salary still does not reflect the amount of work involved in teaching, and this increase is not necessarily seen as significant by some. This was captured in Tyler’s interview:

...teaching is a very stressful job, even more demanding than it was 12 years ago when I started out. And not really attractive, well they say they have improved the scheme of service, but when you look at it, yes there’s more money in figures, but there’s more work, so when you balance it with the money, it does not balance. And when I look in the region, in countries like Mauritius, Reunion, they are developing countries like us; I try to balance it with the cost of living in those places, I would say that we are way behind... because of the way it was said, people are thinking that we are getting more money than anybody, but it’s not true

Similar to other teacher groups the issue of salary not equating to the workload of teachers is again noted by this group and shows that it might be a reason for teachers to leave and take up a less stressful job.

Professional development and career advancement

The lack of professional development for teachers and the unlikely prospect of promotion also featured among the factors that influenced Charles' decision to leave. During the last two years in teaching, Charles pursued a Master's course in another area and he resigned upon his successful completion of that to undertake a leadership position in another Ministry. The issue of training for beginning teachers emerged among participants in case one and it was also given by teachers in this group as one of the reasons for NQTs to leave the profession. The excerpt below is from Joel, who left teaching within his first year:

For us newly qualified teachers, one main reason that has pushed us to leave is that we are not getting the opportunity to do our degree. We don't know where we stand with regards to further training. We were really looking forward to gain that experience, but we've missed out. Some teachers are now in their third year after their diploma and they still haven't done their degree.

So opportunities for further training, both in order to obtain a degree, and for further professional development, are highlighted as a concern by some teachers, thus causing them to look for opportunities outside of teaching.

Workload

One of the main reasons for Joel to leave teaching was the workload. Joel had been teaching for nine months only, and during this time in the school he had taken on extra responsibilities as he explained:

As you know there is an acute shortage of science teachers, so I had a very heavy workload, and it was really difficult for me to prepare for the number of classes that I had. And then there were other responsibilities, like, I was also a class teacher, ... I had an ECA club, I was on the SIP committee for Science, and I worked with students to prepare for the Creole festival, so I would say that at first I was very committed and I was trying to help wherever I could.

Taking extra responsibilities was for Joel a way of showing how committed he was, and he had the desire to feel a sense of belonging to the school. However, this along with other problems that were highlighted by Joel resulted in a sense of burnout and frustration which pushed him to resign.

Personal factors

Among the personal reasons, health and family circumstances were noted, particularly by Tyler, as outlined in the excerpt below:

Well, when I summed up all the pain of the job itself, because teaching is demanding, especially when you've got a family. You've got a baby, you've got a wife, you're trying to find yourself a home and you're having a little bit of health problems here and there. And then you come to school you have students who do not even bother...

For Tyler, these personal reasons were not necessarily the main reasons for his leaving, but rather he left as a result of the repercussions of other issues on his job satisfaction and his sense of efficacy. The statement below made by Tyler demonstrates his emotions which triggered his resignation:

...if you go to a school whereby the students are not responsive, the management is just pointing fingers at you-your commitment will be just like: 'ok, I will go in, fill in a day, once the 2.30 bell goes I pack my bag, I wait for 3.00 and I go through the gate and that's it-another day gone. Tomorrow will be the same thing. And to me at one point this is what was getting at me and I did not want to be there at that level. You come in...you go through the day lethargically from one class to the other. This is wrong, to tell you the truth as a teacher this is wrong, wrong, wrong.

Not being able to deliver good lessons in order to improve the achievements of his students gave rise to a feeling of guilt and low efficacy. This lack of job satisfaction had an adverse effect on his commitment and his decision whether to remain in teaching.

The range of factors which emerged within this case covered a number of issues related to the perceived students' misbehaviour and attitudes. Some noted a number of policy-related concerns which influenced the teachers' decisions to leave, while for others it was a mixture of personal preoccupations and professional-related factors which contributed to their decisions. Some of the factors described by this case of teachers are common to other cases, particularly to the corresponding career stage. For example, for Rana and Joel, who left within the first two years of teaching, their reasons for leaving revolve around the lack of support either from school leadership or from the system, similar to participants from case 1. Both Rana and Joel had undertaken additional responsibilities at the school. There is a possibility that these additional responsibilities for them as beginning teachers were adding extra pressure to their daily tasks which resulted in frustration and burnout leading to resignation. Exiting at mid-career level in this context showed venturing into other jobs with

more prospects in terms of better salary and status. Charles' entry into teaching was to pursue further studies, which raises doubts about whether he really wanted to pursue a career in teaching or to use it as a stepping stone to other professions. So after fulfilling the bonding agreement and after obtaining a higher qualification he decided to leave.

For the more experienced teachers in this study, the reasons they left are more complex as they are often a combination of several factors. The dissatisfaction with the system and conflicts with school leadership provoke reassessment of their situation vis-à-vis their growing familial responsibilities. Health-related factors are also evident at this stage mainly as a result of work related stress and the use of chalk.

Most of the participants in this case noted that they missed teaching; however, none regretted their decisions. Nevertheless, most of them indicated that they would consider coming back if there were changes at policy level. Others indicated that they might decide to come back if they were offered higher positions, for example, as headteacher as noted by Charles, or a teacher educator in the case of Tyler. These comments may suggest that these people do not feel that being a 'regular' teacher provides enough personal reward or recognition and that they are likely to aspire to status in the profession. It is also likely that they will want a position where they think they can make a difference in terms of addressing the issues which they think are hindering the commitment of teachers.

Chapter summary

The diagram in Figure 13 (below) illustrates characteristics of the different cohorts of teachers in the study. The exit column represents case four: teachers who have left at the different stages.

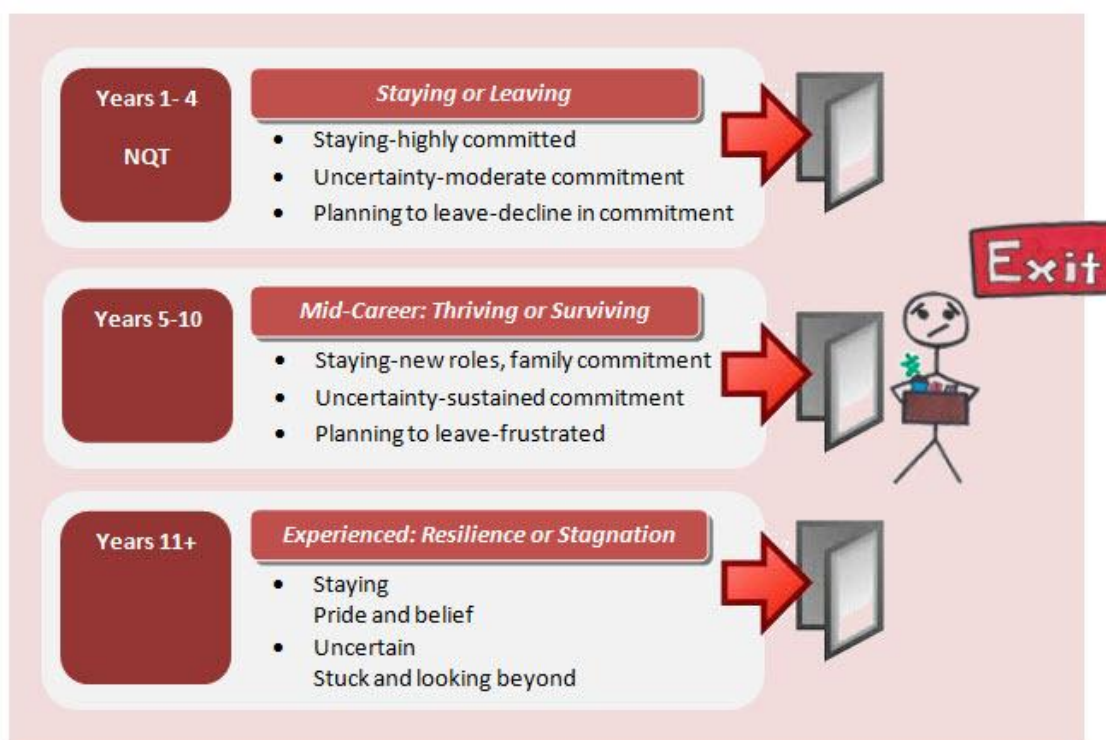


Figure 13: Overall trajectories of the teacher groups

The trend which emerged from the findings shows a number of variations in the levels of commitment and trajectories of teachers at the different stages of their career. Teachers in this study who were in the first few years of teaching appeared to be less committed and more likely to leave the profession than mid-career and more experienced teachers. However, the small number of participants in this and the other cases means that definitive claims cannot be made and larger samples might present variations on these findings. It is possible though to identify a sense of disillusionment and frustration in the NQT group that was leading several participants to seriously consider leaving teaching. The teacher participants at this early stage of their career were experiencing reality shock which manifested in changes of attitudes and commitment, thus suggesting that in the context of Seychelles the NQTs are particularly vulnerable and struggling to reconcile their ideals about teaching with their day-to-day teaching practice. They appear to be particularly vulnerable as they struggle with the challenges of handling students' behaviour, coping with the workload and developing their sense of efficacy. This finding of NQTs being more vulnerable and as having their commitment challenged is contrary to the findings of Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990), who concluded that the teachers in their study were more committed in the early years, with the level of commitment falling after five years and rising again towards the waning years. Similarly, the majority of teachers with 0-3 years of experience in Day et al's (2007) study

displayed a high level of commitment, contrary to my study where the majority displayed a decline in commitment resulting in intention to leave. This raises questions relating to context and what might be happening in Seychelles that is creating such conditions.

The findings support the view that teachers' career stages are not static and should not be seen as a linear progression, but rather that career trajectories fluctuate depending on a range of factors both in the personal and the professional lives of teachers. The data from my study represent ideas reflected across the four cases and show a number of similarities as well as contrasting views which illustrate a broader picture of the factors sustaining or weakening commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles. These factors are illustrated in Figure 14 (below) grouped under three main themes: the personal, school factors and systemic factors, however, they are very much interrelated.

A range of factors has been identified as causing commitment of teachers to grow or decline. Although the findings may echo ideas in literature, different factors may be given different emphasis. For example, students' behaviour and lack of interest in their studies have been found to be the most prominent factor for declining commitment. Whilst data from the VITAE project (Day & Gu, 2007) also indicate students' behaviour as an issue of concern, it was not portrayed as the main problem across the different career stages like in my study.

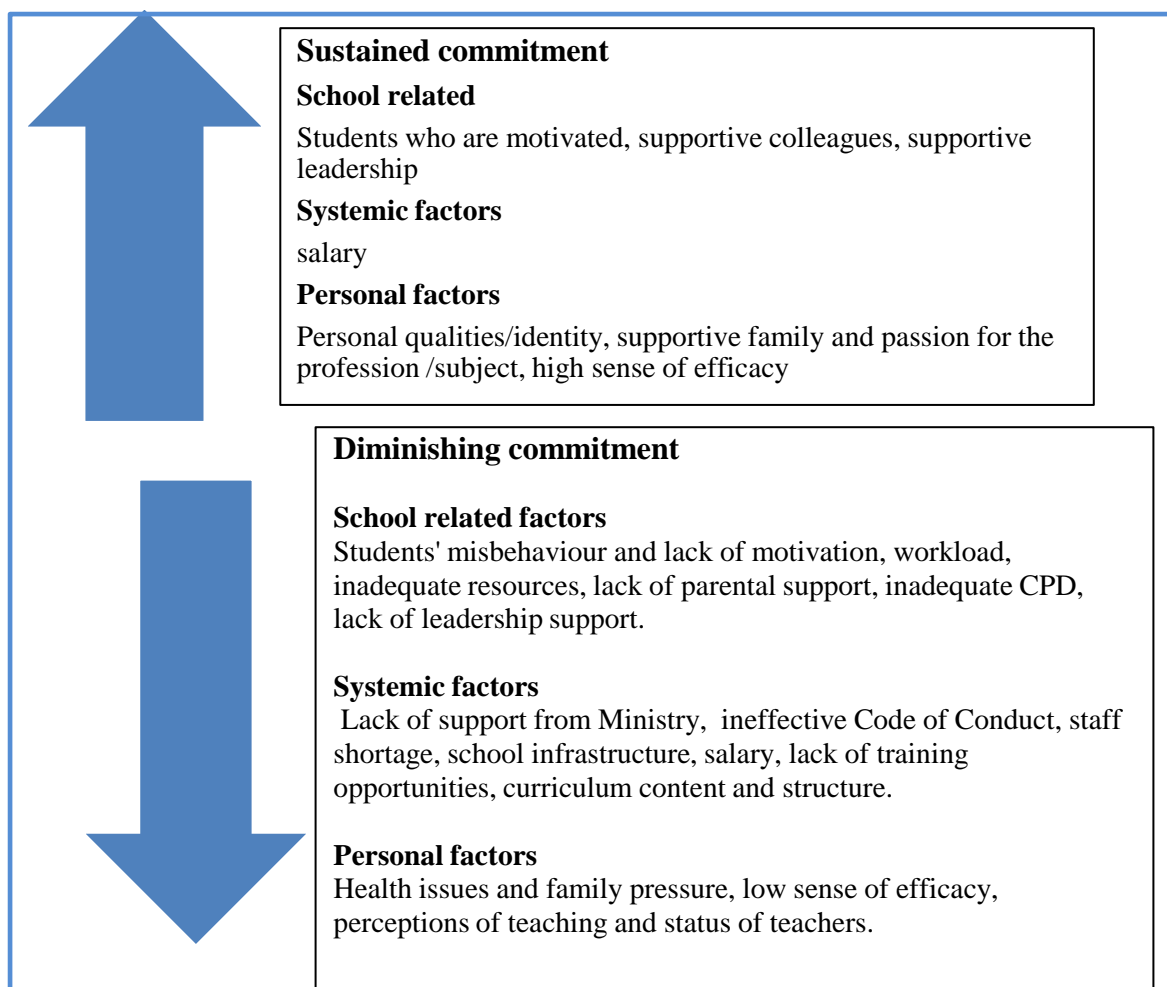


Figure 14: Overview of main factors influencing sustained and declined commitment

Teachers blame a range of factors for undermining their commitment and responsibility for the challenges they experience tend to be directed towards school leadership, policymakers and the system. In studies of teachers' work conducted in developing countries, students' misbehaviour and lack of motivation to learn are seldom mentioned as contributing factors which impact negatively on teachers' performance (Chapman, 1994; Joolideh & Yeshodhara, 2009; Mohan Raju & Srivastava, 1994; Obanya, 2010). These problems are more commonly highlighted in research literature relating to contexts of developed nations. For example, student discipline, apathy and low achievement have been referred to as major sources of stress in Blasé's (1986) study among teachers in the US. Contrary to studies relating to developing nations and similar to studies relating to developed nations, my study reveals that students' behaviour and attitudes are impacting negatively on teachers' experiences and commitment, thus affecting teacher retention. The next chapter presents findings from the perspectives of education stakeholders.

Chapter six: Influences on teachers' commitment: Education stakeholder perspectives

Introduction

This chapter investigates headteachers' and policymakers' perspectives of teacher commitment and trajectories. The purpose of exploring these people's views is not so much to identify the nature of teacher commitment (which can be better obtained from teachers themselves), but to see where and how the views of headteachers and officials/leaders may or may not be in agreement with the teachers. Having the perspectives of headteachers and policymakers may also shed light on the phenomenon of teacher commitment, because teachers could be so enmeshed in their social situations or school milieu that there might be some things about themselves that they cannot see. This means that they might be better observed by others, including those who may be in leadership or policy positions. Such understandings and potential alignment (or otherwise) have implications for policy development relating to teacher education, the ongoing professional development of teachers, and policies relating to teacher retention.

Since policymakers and headteachers perform particular roles and have particular interests, knowledge and understanding of their perceptions could provide some useful insights into what others could do to enhance the wellbeing of teachers in the profession and their commitment in particular. Furthermore, this aspect is a point of difference in my study as it is unusual to include the perceptions of policymakers and headteachers in studies about teacher commitment.

The chapter begins with details about the profiles of the education stakeholders. I use the term stakeholders when drawing the interview responses of both headteachers and policymakers. Otherwise I refer to individual responses in terms of a headteacher or policymaker role.

Profile of participants

The education stakeholders in the study consisted of six headteachers and four policymakers. The headteachers represented secondary schools from different regions in the country,

including one representative of island schools. As outlined in chapter one, secondary schools in Seychelles are not classified according to socio-economic ratings, as is the case in a number of developed nations and even in large developing countries where there are large discrepancies between urban and rural schools. Secondary schools in this study are simply considered large, medium or small schools, depending on the number of students enrolled. As far as possible the representative headteachers are from schools of different sizes with different levels of experience in their headship positions, and are gender balanced. The headteachers have links to the teachers in my study as they work at the same schools. All the headteachers have had leadership training to Master's level, which the Ministry of Education has been running locally for the past decade in conjunction with an overseas institution.

The four policymakers were selected for their involvement in secondary education planning and support. Table 8 (below) shows the profiles of these two groups of participants. The responsibilities of the policymakers have been withheld for confidentiality purposes.

Table 8: Profiles of education stakeholders

Headteachers	Gender	Years of experience as headteachers at the time of the interview
H/T 1-Dylan	Male	5 years
H/T 2-Alicia	Female	1 year and nine months
H/T 3-Didier	Male	7 years
H/T 4-Selma	Female	11 months
H/T 5-Neige	Female	11 months
H/T 6-Judy	Female	7 years
Policymakers	Gender	Experience in policy responsibilities
PM1-Yvonne	Female	6 years
PM2-Etelle	Female	4 years
PM3-Debra	Female	3 years
PM4-Colette	Female	21 years

Factors influencing teacher commitment

The findings which emerged from these two groups reveal diverse issues of contention. In the case of headteachers, their perceptions reflected their daily encounters with the work and lives of teachers in their respective schools. For the policymakers, their insights tended to

reflect their roles in attending to the successful implementation of the wider Ministry objectives in relation to teacher quality and retention, and their responsibility for managing the education budget. In their interviews both groups highlighted factors which were either sustaining the commitment of teachers or causing it to decline. The factors which emerged from the data have been assigned to three different themes: personal factors, school related factors and systemic factors. Each theme is illustrated in the sections which follow through excerpts from the data.

Personal factors

The interviewed headteachers and policymakers identified a range of personal factors which they thought contribute to sustaining or diminishing the commitment levels of teachers. The most commonly mentioned among these were personal qualities, namely passion for the profession, perceptions of teaching, being appreciated, family circumstances and health conditions.

One of the most popular assumptions was the importance of an individual's personality as a contributing factor to the sustained commitment of teachers. For example, Dylan (HT1) said of teachers, 'there are those who are committed no matter what' and 'always give the best of themselves'. This view was supported by most headteachers who used their observations of these qualities as indicators of teachers' strength of commitment to the profession.

Policymakers similarly showed the significance of having the desired qualities in order to be committed, because, for them 'commitment comes from within' (PM2-Etelle). Expanding on this, Yvonne (PM1) emphasised the importance of teachers having a sense of 'belonging to the school' and even 'belonging to the classroom'.

Conversely, a decline in commitment is understood to be caused by teachers not having the 'right' attitudes, a view which was shared by a number of headteachers. Reference was made to teachers who came to work late or who were often absent. For them this was a sign of declining commitment. Such beliefs show the headteachers' expectations of particular teacher attitudes towards their professional responsibilities in the school. A decline in the levels of commitment, according to them, depicted negative attitudes both towards the school as their workplace and towards teaching in general.

Expanding on this view was also the concern that the negative attitude of some teachers was a form of discouragement for others who were highly committed, as encapsulated by Alicia (HT2):

I think attitude also plays a role. By this I mean for example, a teacher may be committed, but if the teachers around that person are not committed, this might negatively influence this teacher. And like the saying goes, ‘one rotten apple can destroy a whole basket’.

Similarly, Didier (HT3) referred to ‘commitment of teachers’ being ‘distorted by other teachers in the school who are not committed’ and will therefore ‘prevent them from trying new ideas’. This indicates a blaming position, whereby a lack of commitment is seen as a personal failing on the part of the teacher.

Being ‘passionate about the profession’ was also seen as a key factor in enhancing commitment as elaborated in the following excerpt:

I think a major factor would be the interest that this teacher has in the career...even if the leader would try his or her best and the support is there, if the teacher doesn’t have teaching at heart...the vocation is not there, then he or she will not be committed (HT2-Alicia).

Neige (HT5) also added that for those who have teaching at heart, “their commitment does not rely entirely on what the school is doing, what the management is doing, it comes from within them”. This view suggests that teachers who are passionate about teaching are automatically committed and the context of the school and leadership in particular does not make a difference in that level of commitment. Three out of the four policymakers also noted the importance of having ‘the love for teaching’ as the key in fostering commitment.

Commenting further on being passionate about the profession, Alicia acknowledged that ‘it is very difficult to teach’ so the person who joins teaching will definitely encounter some ‘ups and downs’; therefore, having teaching as a vocation according to Alicia, will allow ‘you [to] get up and continue’. This shows that headteachers in a way are empathetic towards the challenges that teachers face, while pointing to the importance of seeing teaching as a vocation in order to develop resilience.

On the other hand, not having this passion for the profession was perceived as one of the main factors causing a decline in commitment. This was particularly noted in one of the

reflective journal entries. The extract is provided below and it was recorded after my interview with the second policymaker.

Journal entry

My interview with as policymaker in a way has supported a number of issues raised earlier. The emphasis on commitment of beginning teachers is somewhat worrying—that the majority of the newly qualified teachers joined teaching not as their first choice and thus they leave the profession within a short time after their training. Surely something could be done. I remember a few cases when I was working in teacher education, when students were sent in teacher education because they did not have any other choice for further education, but with counselling some of them are still teaching. Something else comes to mind when listening to Yvonne, there is a lack of acknowledgement about the systemic factors that the teachers themselves (and even headteachers for that matter) talked about, e.g training, resources, teacher shortage.

Reflective journal, 19th December 2010

Most of the headteachers and policymakers in the study were of the view that some secondary teachers were not committed because teaching was not their first or preferred career choice. However, in most cases this perception applied to beginning teachers and it was also given as one of the main reasons for those teachers to leave.

There was a common view among stakeholders that teachers' commitment was enhanced when teachers felt that they were being 'appreciated' or 'recognised' for their efforts and hard work. This view was associated with such positive outcomes as 'reward' and 'job satisfaction', the absence of which, according to them could result in a decline in levels of commitment. The stakeholders observed that teachers generally believe that they are not being recognised for the work that they are doing and are not being appreciated. However, there were nuances among these views. While some headteachers pointed to teachers not being appreciated by the system, some policymakers noted that teachers were not being appreciated by the school leadership. This aligns with views expressed by the teacher groups, who noted the lack of appreciation by both leadership and the system. While this view is closely linked to the status of teaching, it may also have an adverse influence on the development of teachers' professional identities and their sense of efficacy.

Having unrealistic views of teaching was seen by stakeholders as a problem influencing a decline in commitment of teachers. Similarly to the teachers' views, Etelle (PM2) pointed out that teachers had high expectations of teaching and 'they did not expect to see this extent of

misbehaviour in students and their lack of motivation to learn'. This is linked to the disjunction between ideal and reality which was mainly attributed to beginning teachers, as discussed in chapter five. On the other hand, Colette (PM4) showed an appreciation of wider philosophical issues relating to positions taken and assumptions made about teachers' and students' roles, for example, teachers as holders and providers of knowledge and students as passive receivers of knowledge (empty vessels). This was illustrated in her statement:

The majority of Seychelles teachers still tend to consider students as 'empty vessels' to be filled up with academic learning of some kind or else as children are to be seen and not heard. This traditional view of teaching has hardly shifted over the past decades. Students' voice is hardly acknowledged and the whole image of chalk and talk learning has hardly been questioned by teachers.

She insinuates that teachers still perceive their role as that of disseminating information to students who are there as passive recipients. Once again, this observation shows that the stakeholders place the responsibility on teachers for the problems in schools. However, this can be interpreted in other ways, which have not been noted by stakeholders.

One possible reason for the traditional ways of teaching could be the strict adherence to a prescribed national curriculum and the tendency of teachers teaching to the test. A second reason might be a lack of resources which limit the teacher's choice of teaching approaches. A third reason could be the comfort and confidence in using approaches they experienced and which are familiar to them. Fourthly, the type of training may have determined their teaching approaches. Students' misbehaviour and attitudes, and the working conditions in the schools could also explain why these teachers reverted to conventional ways of teaching.

Other personal factors which emerged from the data from headteachers and policymakers which could have some negative impact on the performance of teachers featured such issues like, health problems, particularly in relation to the level of work-related stress and the use of chalk, and family or other personal circumstances. These factors were also common among teachers across the different cases.

School-related factors

A range of professional factors were suggested by stakeholders as causing either an enhancement or a decline in teachers' commitment. Some of these were the school environment, which included students' behaviour and attitude, parental involvement and

support, support of school leaders, collegiality, workload, professional development and infrastructure. These factors are discussed below.

The importance of having a conducive school environment emerged from both headteachers and policymakers as the most common factor in sustaining or diminishing teachers' commitment. Other terms such as 'school atmosphere' or 'school ethos' or 'school climate' were used to indicate ideas about what an environment conducive to learning ought to be. A conducive school environment was explained as being about personal beliefs and the extent to which they are evident in practice. Beyond relationships it also extends to other related elements within the school which can consequently affect teachers' work such as workload, physical infrastructure of the school, facilities and resources, all of which have been highlighted by headteachers and policymakers in the interview data.

Students' behaviour and attitudes

Having students who are motivated to learn has been emphasised by most headteachers and policymakers alike as an influential factor in sustaining teachers' commitment, an element which featured strongly among most teacher participants. Views were expressed that 'if the group of students that they are teaching is motivated', then the teachers' commitment will increase and they will be encouraged to 'prepare good lessons, go to classes early and cater for the kids, even after school hours' (HT5: Neige). A similar sentiment was shared by Etelle (PM2). For her having motivated students was attributed to 'feel[ing] rewarded'. Such emotions according to her 'keep teachers going'. This aspect is linked to the notion of being appreciated, which was mentioned earlier. Teachers in general feel good when their students achieve. Students' attitude and behaviour are therefore seen as closely linked to teacher effectiveness in the classroom, thus serving to boost teachers' morale and their sense of efficacy. Most of the stakeholders in the study attached significant importance to achievements of students as reflected in Dylan's (HT1) statement:

...they want to achieve something meaningful, so in order to get commitment from them they must see this happening. ...for example they must be in an effective school, they must see results, and they must see students producing as a result of their hard work.

The focus on the end results was seen as a major influence on teachers' increased commitment, which is important for headteachers as it contributes to the overall success of the school. Achievements in terms of students' performance along with the importance of developing a good relationship with students' appears to be among the main concerns of

headteachers and policymakers alike. Students who show interest in their learning and produce good results have also been highlighted by most teacher cases as the most influential factor in their sustained commitment.

Conversely, the upsurge of students' misbehaviour and their attitude towards learning appeared as a major contributing factor towards the decline in teachers' commitment accentuated by both headteachers and policymakers. Most participants from both groups used words like 'major' or 'biggest' to stress their concerns about discipline in schools. A few examples from both groups are given below:

...one is discipline, this is number one at present-misbehaviour, disruptive students (HT6-Judy).

But also the students' behaviour, discipline...This is a big issue (HT5-Neige)

Because one of the biggest de-motivating factors...I think is discipline in schools (HT1-Dylan).

Students' behaviour is a major-I would put it as number one (PM2-Etelle)

In discerning the complexity of this issue which was seen as pervading schools, several interrelated dimensions emerged. Similar to the teacher groups, some highlighted the repercussions of misbehaviour on teachers' teaching strategies and on their sense of efficacy in general. One such example was given by Neige (HT5) in the excerpt below:

There are classes where they feel they cannot teach, they do not get the respect from students, so they are not really interested in going there. If they go, they go really late, they prepare brief exercises for the students to do, but the problem with this is that it creates more problems for them. When they go to classes not fully prepared and the students are not really following, it becomes more of a problem for them and this lowers their commitment.

Teachers were observed by stakeholders to experience a decline in commitment when there was a lack of respect from students and furthermore, the interruptions in class caused them to revert to the 'chalk and talk' method to keep students under control. But as pointed out by Neige this in a way created more problems. While acknowledging the problem of misbehaviour, Neige also held teachers accountable for the misbehaviour of students through their lack of adequate preparation for classes and their poor punctuality.

Dylan (HT1) echoed the responsibilities of teachers in maintaining discipline in their classes, but he also showed how this was interconnected with the role of the headteacher:

So if the leader in the school can foster good discipline in a school, I think you will get more commitment from teachers, but ironically it's the teachers who will help you to ensure that there is discipline in the school, to ensure that there's a good level of achievement, so basically it's all interconnected.

Related to the misbehaviour of students, the lack of respect was also emphasised by a number of headteachers thus supporting views expressed by the teacher groups. For example, Dylan (HT1) said that: "...the kids can be really disrespectful, they can really humiliate a teacher....and I think this is what kills their commitment". Such a sentiment was shared by others from both groups. However, headteachers in particular, were also empathetic towards these difficult students as their behaviour could be manifestations of their social difficulties. Alicia's (HT2) statement encapsulates this dimension:

...the students behave as such, because they too are facing a lot of hardship...and sometimes they misbehave as a cry for help. There are students who misbehave because they are under the influence of substance...

The observation that 'some students are traumatised as kids' was also raised by others, who added that, for those students their problems mainly originated from home. In most cases these students, were living either with grandparents only or in families of single parents, or there was no supervision after school and in the morning as parents were working. But another perspective was presented by Dylan (HT1) who noted that:

...with that I think teachers have not much time as before to know their students, to know their problems, their difficulties- schools have become more impersonal and behaviour problems increased as a result of that, and of course behaviour problems is one of the main factors for teacher attrition.

In discussing the notion of teachers being impersonal in the context of secondary schools in Seychelles, Dylan referred to the way that secondary schools were currently organised on a regional basis, which had resulted in larger secondary schools. He was of the view that the previous system which featured smaller secondary schools in each district was more favourable for the management of students and for monitoring and follow-up of individual cases. It was also better for both students and teachers in terms of the distance to travel to schools and created a more positive sense of community.

Parental involvement and support

Parental involvement and support have been identified by most stakeholders in the study, mainly as having a negative impact on the work of teachers, apart from two headteachers who noted that they do get some support from a few parents. The others pointed to the perceived ‘lack of support from parents and community’ which was demonstrated in several ways. For some headteachers, it was the attitude of indifference among parents with regard to their child’s education. In the words of Alicia, “most of the time the students who are not motivated it is a result of their parents not showing interest in their education”. So there was this view that some parents would not come to the school when they were called in and would not ensure that their children did their homework. On the other hand, Alicia (HT2) and Neige (HT5) believed that parents themselves had no control and they either did not come to the school when they were called, or if they did come their presence was ineffectual, as evident in the excerpts below:

Most of the time with this group of students the schools find...we find us alone... It’s us and the students-the parents are not involved. Therefore, this too sometimes can negatively influence commitment (HT2)

..and when you call in parents, the parents will not have any control, they will ask us to do what we think should be done, because they themselves they don’t know what to do with these kids (HT5)

Taking this further, Dylan (HT1) pointed to the lack of responsibility on the part of the parents which according to him was partly due to a system deficit.

...there is a big problem in our system here in the Seychelles, parents are not held accountable, ok. Parents are not held accountable at all. And this is also a huge de-motivating factor for teachers, because teachers are expected to take up where parents fail. But there is no mechanism to ensure that parents take their responsibilities. And of course with all the negative influences in our society this category of parents is becoming larger and larger.

Dylan and other headteachers highlighted some of the circumstances pertaining to their perceived system deficit or lack of support. One example was of parents reporting some student related matters to the Ministry, where they would be supported over the decision of the teachers and headteachers. Such practices were seen by headteachers as not getting parents to accept their responsibilities, as in ‘most cases these students are problem students’ who would come back to the school and the classroom with an attitude that he/she has won over the teacher and the school. This sort of scenario was also raised by the teacher groups,

and was given as one of the reasons for the lack of respect for teachers. However, policymakers also acknowledged the lack of support from parents and they further pointed to the defensive behaviour of parents in relation to ‘their child’s performance or behaviour’. On some occasions this had resulted in parents coming into the school with the intention to insult teachers, or they would ‘wait for the teacher outside the school at times’ for acts of aggression.

School leadership

One significant aspect stakeholders thought was conducive in sustaining commitment of teachers was the relationship between teachers and the leadership team of the school. This included the leadership style and the extent to which teachers felt that they were supported by their headteachers and the management team of the school. Alicia (HT2) elaborated her views in the following excerpt:

One of the major factors would be the leadership style... By this I mean, if the management under the leadership of the headteacher, would for example adopt as much as possible, what we call the distributive leadership, whereby that headteacher would feel that he or she trusts all the teachers, and he or she believes that every teacher in that school has potential, has talent, has abilities and use these abilities...that of course will enhance and develop the commitment further.

A number of issues have been highlighted in this statement. For example, according to Alicia, adopting a distributive leadership provided scope for teachers to participate in decision-making, a point which was also mentioned by Etelle (PM2). So participation in decision-making would increase teacher commitment as teachers would feel that they were being supported and if their ideas and suggestions were taken on board, they would feel that they were working together towards the goal of the school. Along with this, therefore, was the notion of trust which has also been emphasised as an important element in the adoption of distributive leadership. This would likely further develop a positive relationship that would in turn show the teachers that they were ‘valued and appreciated’ for the work that had been entrusted to them. However, it was hard to tell whether this was being practised, because the views from teacher interviews showed an unsatisfactory interaction with the school leadership, such as not being listened to or respected and being blamed in general. Stakeholders recognised conflicts between school leaders and teachers as a reason why some teachers leave. This is consistent with reports from teachers in Case 4.

Two of the policymakers also noted concerns about school leadership, for example, Yvonne (PM1) affirmed that some teachers resigned because ‘they don’t like the school management’ and also cited that:

This is why in the headteachers’ meeting we have to tell headteachers, that they don’t recruit teachers, they do not know the trouble we go through to get teachers, and once the teachers are in your school, you have to try to maintain. The few that we get, they should try to manage them well. This is why we try to strengthen management; I don’t think we are there yet.

It appears that in the eyes of policymakers, not all headteachers ‘are taking their responsibilities’ and they are ‘not accountable’. The perception is that these headteachers are not ‘nurturing teachers who are recruited’ (particularly in view of the difficulty in having the right candidates) in order to enhance their commitment and to keep them in the profession.

On the other hand, from headteachers’ perspectives:

A lot of things at my level I could do to improve my school, but I cannot, because I take directives from the central office, from the Ministry (HT1-Dylan).

So from the views of headteachers, the inconsistencies in the system were undermining their efforts in their leadership styles and responsibilities, which were having adverse implications on their efforts in sustaining the commitment of teachers. In general there was evidence of some sensitivity to systemic factors which was likely influencing teacher commitment, thus indicating that having sustained or diminished commitment was not entirely up to the teachers personally.

Whereas the perspectives of teachers focused on the unsatisfactory interaction with their headteachers, pointing to issues like not being listened to or respected and having fingers pointed at them, for headteachers the main frustrations were towards the system which they perceived as restricting their decisions and performance. On the other hand, the policymakers’ main concerns were with the perceived lack of accountability of headteachers.

Collegiality

Collegiality, or the relationship that teachers hold with their colleagues, was also emphasised by stakeholders. Neige (HT5) pointed particularly to the relationship with the HOD as the person with the immediate supervisory role for teachers. Her reference suggests that the HOD should be seen more like a colleague in order to enhance commitment and contribute to a

good working atmosphere within the department and the school. In a similar vein, other policymakers also noted the importance of having good relationships to maintain a ‘good working atmosphere in the school’. For example, Yvonne referred to ‘the kind of relationship that they build in the workplace’ and ‘if there is this togetherness, this sharing of ideas irrespective if [one is] teaching S4 and [the other is] teaching S1’. This sentiment of teamwork was highlighted by Yvonne as desirable in order to enhance commitment. It was something positive which she herself experienced when working at primary level, but was lacking at secondary level. Having supportive colleagues was commonly mentioned among the teacher groups as one of the most positive sources of support within the school environment.

Workload

Workload emerged as a significant concern for stakeholders as it results in a decline of commitment of teachers. This was also emphasised by the teacher groups, so there were some similarities in the perceptions of headteachers and policymakers, but there were also a number of nuances in their views which are worth noting.

Similar to teacher groups the problem of having too much paper work was highlighted by Judy (HT6) and Yvonne (PM1), but with different emphases:

I would say it’s because of the workload, too much paper work for some teachers, they can never switch off, for example, some of them they stay until quite late, sometimes until 6.00 o’clock, they have to give extra classes sometimes, so it’s the workload I believe (HT6-Judy).

...some of them will say that the teaching load is too heavy, too much paper work or administrative work-this is a big problem for them, because they don’t believe in record keeping and things like that, they will say that they spend a lot of time on paper work; so it’s those kind of factors that would negatively influence their commitment, because to them teaching is coming, deliver and go. They know that they have to mark, but nowadays, planning, preparing visual aids, keeping records, doing a bit of searching for their subject – today they don’t want to do these, for them these are extra work, extra pressure, not enough time with my family-so these are the factors that influence low commitment to the point that they leave(PM1-Yvonne).

There was this sympathetic feeling on the part of headteachers based on first hand observation of teachers in their schools. The workload was increased by the amount of paper-work, but also the extra classes that teachers had to organise either to prepare the students for

the international examinations or to cover for the curriculum in view of the shortage of teachers. However, from the perspective of policymakers, although the amount of paper-work was mentioned, the suggestion was that this paper-work was necessary for accountability checks. But the fact that teachers have to cover for shortage of teachers was not mentioned by policymakers.

For headteachers there was also a feeling of guilt in that they sometimes had to put additional pressure on teachers, as illustrated by Alicia who said:

Sometimes, I as a headteacher I am contributing to destroy the commitment of teachers, not because I want to do it, it's the situation of the day, it's the conditions of work. It's workload and place of work as well. I think that sometimes we ask them to do too much at the same time. Sometimes it's good, but we need to know the limit (HT2).

Inherent in this view were the headteachers' constraints in being able to enhance the working conditions of teachers because of the teacher shortage, which was seen as a problem of the system. Stakeholders recognise workload factors that teachers in the study also identified as problems or challenges for teachers.

Professional development

There were fewer comments on factors related to professional development and less emphasis was placed on these factors by headteachers and policymakers, compared to the teacher groups. For the teacher groups the main concerns were with provisions for upgrading courses in their subjects in order to enhance their professional growth, and with further training. For headteachers the concerns were two-fold; first it was the training of specialists to help the schools with special needs students, and then the provision of professional development to help schools implement new policies. These were felt to be lacking.

Infrastructure

Having a good working environment requires having the necessary infrastructure and adequate facilities in place, an aspect which was particularly noted by headteachers. Having the adequate physical infrastructure was seen as significant in supporting the goals of education. This was necessary for the provision of quality education. A range of concerns transpired from the findings regarding the physical structures of the school in terms of maintenance of the buildings, provision of furniture and other equipment and facilities. This

was seen as a responsibility of the system, thus beyond the control of school leadership. One such example was encapsulated in Alicia's words:

And then it's the environment as well, because I think if the environment is a welcoming one, that they've got all the furniture, like chairs to sit on, all the windows and doors are in place, they can stand at the door and welcome the students in, you know. But if you look at the environment here it is not at all conducive, so it is destroying commitment of teachers. Sometimes you have to go round looking for furniture, at the end of the day you're tired looking for furniture, so your approach to teaching changes (HT2).

That students had to move around to get furniture was also echoed by Didier (HT3) who added that 'this causes problems for the students and teachers as students move around to look for chairs'. The disruptions caused by this took up curriculum time, which evidently had implications for students' performance. Furthermore, not having a pleasant classroom atmosphere due to lack of furniture and adequate infrastructure 'can be demoralising for both teachers and students'. Judy (HT6) noted that her school had not been painted for the seven years of her headship. In addition to not having the infrastructure in place, headteachers pointed to the shortage of instructional resources for teaching as well as other equipment and facilities. Neige (HT5), for example, mentioned not having an internet connection at the school 'for almost a year'.

Such conditions were likely to cause a decline in teachers' commitment because of their efforts to vary their teaching approaches being constrained by the shortage of instructional resources, which could also have adverse effect on students' behaviour. Such issues aligned with findings from the teacher groups, particularly in relation to the shortage of instructional resources which was more prominent across the teacher cases. Teachers pointed to other concerns in relation to infrastructure, such as having overcrowded classes. But such issues were not mentioned by stakeholders. Although policymakers talked about the importance of having a conducive environment, the notion of school infrastructure and resources was not discussed by them.

Systemic factors

Among the systemic factors that were highlighted by stakeholders as influences on teacher commitment were issues of salary, staff shortage and policies. These were sometimes related to other school factors mentioned above and were seen to be the product of a highly

centralised system. Some of the systemic factors which emerged were similar to those of the teacher groups, but some disjunctions were observed.

Salary

Contrasting views on the issue of salary emerged. A small number of headteachers and policymakers alike made reference to the salary. However, as mentioned in chapter 5, findings from the teacher groups also showed salary to be an issue of contention. Similarly, Judy (HT6), Neige (HT5) and Alicia (HT2) made reference to the attractiveness of the salary particularly for NQTs, which according to them was relatively high compared to an entry point salary in a number of other professions, and could positively influence the commitment of these beginning teachers. On the other hand, Dylan (HT1) noted that ‘teachers’ salaries are not that attractive as compared to other professions and the private sector’, and Etelle (PM2) added that ‘teachers are well accepted on the job market and they are better paid, especially if they hold a degree’.

Conversely, most headteachers and policymakers mentioned salary as one of the conditions influencing teachers’ diminishing commitment in relation to decisions to leave. For some, particularly policymakers, there was a similar view to that of the teachers. This was in relation to the worth of the salary vis-à-vis the workload rather than the amount of money at stake (PM1-Yvonne). From another perspective, three of the headteachers noted the problem with the reviewed Teachers’ Scheme of Service, which according to them had resulted in newly qualified teachers earning more than experienced teachers in the system. One headteacher noted that they were even ‘earning more than a headteacher’, giving herself as an example.

Staff shortage

Staff shortage was another pertinent issue particularly for school leaders. For example, Didier (HT3) pointed to the adverse effects that the teacher shortage had on his daily tasks:

In my case I will take teacher shortage as one, particularly in Maths and Science. So I see myself teaching and this has had some negative impact recently particularly this year on my leadership, supporting the teachers though I try to sort of boost their morale, talk to them but you have less time to monitor, to work with them because you have your load of planning, marking and doing ROA (Records of Achievements)

In this case the shortage of teachers was having a negative impact on his daily duties as he had to cover those classes with no teachers and this left him with less time to support other

teachers. From the perspective of policymakers the areas of shortage were specified and the likely reasons for these, as illustrated by Etelle (PM2):

...there's not enough...recently we have seen there are no Maths and Science teachers, why? Because with Maths and Science you can go everywhere. There are more language teachers, why? It's easier to get an O' level or A' level in languages. Maths and Science are subjects where you need to think, so you need to concentrate. But if the behaviour is not good you will not understand.

Such a perception suggests the reason for the difficulty in recruiting teachers in particular subject areas, which might be associated with other opportunities on the job market, or might be attributed to the poor performance in those areas due to misbehaviour and disruptions in the class. The shortage of teachers aligned with teachers' comments relating to lack of time and increased workload, which was also attributed to covering for the classes without teachers. However, the concern of headteachers was in relation to shortage of not only teachers (although this was the major one) but also other support staff who could assist with low-ability students and misbehaviour, for example, a school counsellor who was not available in most of the schools whose headteachers were interviewed. For example, Alicia (HT2) noted that the shortage of staff was also a hindrance in relation to the implementation of the new Code of Conduct. She elaborated:

...we don't have a school counsellor. If there was one at least, that person would be supporting those students in need. And secondly, we are not getting any specialist help that these students need

The shortage of staff in relation to the school's need for specialist help was also highlighted by other headteachers, particularly in relation to helping students with special needs.

Policy issues

Reforms and new policies have been reported by most headteachers to have an adverse effect on teachers' commitment in general and may also impede their efforts to sustain the commitment of the teachers in their schools. Among the examples which were most often given was the new behaviour policy, which according to most headteachers was resulting in more workload for teachers and slowed action in response to students' misbehaviour. From the perspective of Colette the concern was further exemplified in her statement: "the current behaviour policy is not working; actually some schools are even using the previous one, which they find was more effective" (PM4).

Colette justified her perception through a situation that she observed in one school: “I was in a school and an incident happened, when we checked in the new policy there was nothing there, so we looked in the previous one it was stated clearly” (PM4).

There were other concerns with regard to policies. For example, for headteachers in particular, there was the view that there were too many new policies that were being imposed on the schools. The schools were not ready to take these on board and these policies were not necessarily responding to the needs of the school. This is expressed below:

...they can't come in with a 'fait accompli' programme, saying we have come to do this, to have this training session, but maybe our staff don't need this, you know. They should be meeting the needs of the staff. These days the system is promoting differentiated learning, it's a very good approach, but the teachers are not trained to do it. The environment is not ready for us to introduce differentiated teaching (HT2-Alicia).

This was suggesting that new programmes and policies were being introduced without consultation with schools or teachers, and thus it was seen as being a top-down decision. It was an indication that sometimes it was not only a matter of not accepting the changes, but also of having inadequate preparation for the introduction of new policies, including training of people. Similar points were commonly cited by teachers across the cases. But these issues were not raised by policymakers whose main concerns were to ensure that Ministry policies are implemented.

Curriculum

Accompanying the concerns for policies was the perception that having a prescribed curriculum has a negative influence on teacher commitment. This was an issue of the perceived inflexibility in the prescribed curriculum which was not allowing teachers to cater for all ability levels. This was raised earlier when discussing students' attitudes towards learning. Four out of the six headteachers made reference to the national curriculum, particularly the academic areas, which low ability students were not able to follow. Such a view was also common among a number of teacher participants. The context of Seychelles with regard to the national curriculum has been elaborated in chapter one. This specific context may explain some of the difficulties in putting across the curriculum content to low ability students. There was a perceived lack of provision in the national curriculum for those students who could not follow what was prescribed, a problem which school leaders attributed to the system. Judy (HT6) made reference to a new programme which was being

introduced on a pilot basis with a group of low ability students from secondary three. She was hopeful that it would work and thus relieve some of the school's pressure.

Other concerns in relation to the curriculum pertained to a perceived weakness in diagnosing students with special needs, and Dylan (HT1) explained his position in this regard:

...the system is such that we are not taking good care of students who have learning difficulties, ok. We are very backward in diagnosing, and meeting the needs of students who have psychological problems, or other mental problems, like OCD, autism... These things are shoved under the table. These kids at these schools are labelled as 'bad kids' by teachers, you know because the teachers don't know about these things and there is this big hole in our system where we are not training enough people to take care of these kids.

So on one hand there was the inability of students to follow the national curriculum, because of special conditions which were not being diagnosed, thus causing further complications for both teachers and these students, and on the other hand, it was linked to the lack of training in such areas to cater for the needs of schools in general. Most of the headteachers expressed similar concerns and a number of them along with one of the policymakers referred to the need to have a specialised institution to cater for these types of students, whom Etelle (PM2) felt 'schools cannot handle'. Clarifying his position, Dylan (HT1) asserted that he was 'not advocating for exclusion', but if the system could not make provision for 'specialised staff such as a psychologist' at the school, then it would be to the advantage of schools and those students for them to be in specialised institutions. However, the idea of a specialised institution was also suggested as one which would serve as a 'corrective centre' for students with severe behaviour problems.

A number of factors have emerged as influencing the levels of commitment of teachers as seen from the perspectives of headteachers and policymakers. While these factors reflect a similar trend, there are some particular disparities. The factors viewed from the perspectives of policymakers were not necessarily in tune with those of the headteachers, as their accounts were likely to be consistent with their responsibilities in the system. The next section discusses the perceptions of those education stakeholders on the different trajectories of secondary teachers in the context of Seychelles.

Perceptions of teachers' career trajectories

This section explores findings from education stakeholders' perceptions on the fluctuation of commitment across secondary teachers' careers and the teachers' trajectories. The general perceptions of teachers' trajectories are first presented, followed by some specific observations on the reasons why teachers stay or leave the profession at the different points. These findings are closely linked to the factors that influence teachers' commitment discussed above thus showing the complexity of the phenomenon of commitment reflected in the complex nature of teachers' work.

There was a shared understanding across stakeholders' perceptions of the trajectories of secondary teachers, but I also note the complexity that this presented. Most headteachers and policymakers referred to a level of enthusiasm in the NQTs, which they observed to ebb after the first two years as compared to those with more experience. This was articulated by Judy:

I start with those with one or two years of experience, when they first come from NIE or from their BEd, they are full of enthusiasm, after two or three years then they start falling into a drudge, it's more or less mechanical, they just follow the time, but when I take those with a good number of years of experience, they are the dedicated ones, the committed ones (HT6).

At one level this view suggests that the headteachers think that experienced teachers are more reliable or better able to cope due to their experience. At another level the tone is one of criticism of NQTs as being unable to cope and 'falling into a drudge', and this is seen as a personal problem of the NQTs. Therefore, it appears that this perception points to a problem with the NQTs who cannot cut it, rather than with the system or the school, or other contextual factors. Although this view was shared by most participants, there was a level of scepticism about this claim by some of the headteachers. An example of this ambivalence was provided by Alicia:

...when they come from training for example, NQT, they come in, they are very enthusiastic, but then sometimes it takes less than a year for this enthusiasm to diminish and for them to give it up. In my case in this school, I've got one with eight months after training, who has already resigned. But speaking to her, based on what she said, its students' behaviour. But when I look at her in class, I would say she was a devoted teacher. I felt at the beginning that she was committed and that teaching was her vocation. But now I have this mixed feeling...because there are people in my school who have been teaching for more than twenty five years and yet the commitment is there (HT2).

The uncertainty expressed by Alicia in trying to understand the differences in teachers' trajectories was also echoed by Dylan, who further added:

In general the level of commitment you will see [is] very high among those who are new, ok, hmm....and then it starts to level off., ok. But on the other hand you will have people who will stay committed throughout their lives, so...I think it's a matter of that person...the make-up of the teacher. I think it's something that comes naturally to some people, and then...let me say it this way-people have degrees of it, people have degrees of it and some people with a lot of commitment, no matter what difficulty they get into, they give all their commitment (HT1).

Such views suggest that being committed is entirely a personal thing and if a person is committed other factors are not really important, and probably this is the sort of person whom most headteachers are expecting to see in the role of teachers.

The discussion in the next section turns to the different career stages which are represented by the teachers participating in the study. This will help to clarify education stakeholders' perceptions of what characterises teachers at each of the stages represented in the study compared to what emerged from the data based on the teachers' own experiences. The alignments or disjunctions that emerge provide a better understanding of the discourses on reasons why teachers stay or leave at different stages of their career.

Newly qualified teachers

The problematic nature of issues surrounding beginning teachers' commitment was made explicit by both headteachers and policymakers. This complexity was evident through the contrasting views about the characteristics attributed to these new teachers and the diversity of reasons provided by stakeholders about what influences these teachers' decisions to stay or leave teaching.

Even if most education stakeholders believed that beginning teachers are highly motivated at the beginning of their career, contrary views were also reflected in their discussions specific to these early teachers.

What most of the stakeholders in this study considered to be among the main reasons provided for remaining in teaching, were encapsulated by Judy (HT6) who said 'I believe some teachers really love the job, they like being with students, they like their job, nothing

else'. For Judy and a few others, the passion for the profession as elaborated earlier is the stronghold for retention of these teachers, again indicating that other school-related or systemic factors were not really important. Others, like Neige, felt that there were other possible aspects which kept these early career teachers in teaching:

What makes them stay in I think is the challenge, like everyday there are different things to do, so it keeps you going; and also there are very good students, very good classes, and teachers enjoy those good classes. I don't know if the salary has something to do with it, because teaching is quite well paid as compared to other jobs. And also the atmosphere at the school, the interaction with others in their department, if they get along well with their colleagues (HT5).

So it suggests that the challenge of teaching can also be positive for some of these teachers thus enhancing their commitment and making them stay in teaching. Other factors that have been noted by Neige have been mentioned earlier, such as having committed students/classes and the salary.

It was clearly indicated that more teachers in the early years leave teaching and for some, the most significant reason was because teaching was not their career choice, as expressed by Etelle (PM2):

"Mainly...I would question whether they made the right choice coming into teaching; I would question their commitment and their love for teaching".

This view was supported by Yvonne (PM1), who mentioned that in the exit interviews with NQTs who resigned, there was acknowledgement that teaching was not their choice. According to Alicia (HT2), if these new teachers have not made the right choice and there are 'other opportunities on the labour market' they would leave. Affirming this view, Judy (HT6) gave an example from her school:

Two newly qualified teachers have just resigned, one from the BEd course in Australia, and the other from the NIE Diploma. They told me that they don't have it in them.

Most of the other references that have been made by both headteachers and policymakers were directed towards the recognition of the reality of the challenges in teacher education, recruitment and retention of teachers in Seychelles. For example, in the eyes of many of these education stakeholders, beginning teachers in general entered teaching for the training

opportunities, particularly ‘overseas training’, and thus teaching for them was a stepping stone to other opportunities, and as stated by Alicia:

...this group would be the ones who have used the training opportunity, because remember, all along until very recently the students who did not meet the criteria for A’ levels at the end secondary school, they opted for teaching because opportunities were green, it was great, because they could take A’ level in one subject, then go to ex-NIE, then proceed for BEd overseas (HT2).

Alicia’s remark was directed towards the Government initiatives to attract more secondary teachers (see chapter one). So for some education stakeholders, the perception was that teaching was not a first career choice, but rather an opportunity in terms of further training with the likelihood of moving to other professions once qualified. Whether teaching was or was not a sincere career choice for these individuals was a question for some education stakeholders because, as pointed out by Alicia, a large number of them ‘opted to stay overseas where they are still teaching’ or they resign from public school to go and teach in private schools.

That teaching was used as a gateway to further training was also pointed out by both headteachers and policymakers. For example, Neige pointed out that:

...in my view, they chose teaching just because it was the option available to them, they had not... a lot of them they have not, like , scored high grades, therefore teaching was the next best option available to them and they are doing it for the sake of it, ok. But I know cases where they will tell you, like, since we’re not going overseas to study, if it’s local, I won’t carry on in teaching, when my bond is over I will leave the profession. So it’s these little things like that (HT5).

Further to the affirmation of NQTs’ concern for further training (which also emerged from the beginning teachers themselves in chapter five) the above excerpt is suggesting that those candidates who got into teaching were not from the high achievers, but rather those who did not get into other high level courses, as similarly referred to by Alicia.

There were also uncertainties in the stakeholders’ perceptions of those beginning teachers in relation to their lack of commitment and low retention. For example, Judy alluded that:

...I don’t know if it is something lacking in the training, or our way of life, how we go about our life these days, or if its society...the way society has developed; I don’t know what, but this commitment, this dedication, is lacking in new teachers (HT6)

As evident in the interview data stakeholders suggested a number and combination of reasons that they think influences the commitment of NQTs, including personal interest in overseas travel and broader social and systemic factors. However, some stakeholders made reference to the importance of supporting those new teachers, an aspect which was picked up by Dylan and Etelle:

Young teachers, they don't know much, there needs to be what we call the socialisation process. If you come to a school and there is this culture or we take care of our students, we tackle inappropriate behaviour and so on, they will learn from that. But if they come into a school and there's none of that they will not learn. They will come with energy, but they are like a big glass that's empty, ok. Of course not totally empty, because they have their teacher training, but a lot of the training also happens in schools from more experienced teachers, ok (HT1-Dylan).

And then they will also say the post-training preparation, for example they've been trained, now they are in the school, and then there's no progression, to prepare them to take on their roles and duties (PM2-Etelle)

The importance of providing support to these new teachers was emphasised by both headteachers and policymakers because, as noted by Dylan, 'if there is not a healthy culture in that school' then the teachers will 'get discouraged very easily' or they will quickly 'pick up very negative habits', which will also contribute to their decision to leave the system and look for better opportunities on the job market. In relation to this, findings from the case studies similarly indicated the adverse effect of a lack of induction programme on commitment of beginning teachers.

Workload was also observed as among the main reasons for the NQTs to leave. This was attributed to the inability to 'cope with the pressure', and the view that these young teachers did not realise that there would be 'that amount of work involved' in teaching (PM1-Yvonne).

As further noted by Colette (PM4):

For the young secondary teachers especially, who often joined the system mainly as a means of acquiring better qualifications, it is easy to become demoralised.

Both workload and pressure appeared to present a source of disillusion for these newly qualified teachers and this was coupled with students' misbehaviour which was highlighted as another major contributor to attrition.

Both headteachers and policymakers noted disciplinary problems, but with different emphases. For example, for both Etelle (PM2) and Alicia (HT2) students' misbehaviour was seen as the main factor for attrition of NQTs, while Yvonne (PM1) and Judy (HT6) rated it as a second factor after workload. From another angle, Dylan (HT1) pointed to the Code of Conduct, stating that:

I think chief among them, I would be precise here, chief among them is the policy to manage students' behaviour. It's not the students themselves, ok, it's the policies as set by the Ministry of Education for managing students' behaviour. It involves a lot of paper work, long procedures before students are tackled. This is something I think which is discouraging teachers a lot.

Such views were also expressed by most of the teachers from different cases. Other factors that have been highlighted by the stakeholders were issues such as health reasons, mainly related to 'the use of chalk and hypertension' or the 'expectations that these teachers had', which led to a sense of disillusion as discussed earlier.

Mid-career teachers

The mid-career teachers were generally portrayed by education stakeholders as either unstable or stuck and they were often regarded as a group of teachers 'who are waiting for their bonding agreement to be over for them to leave' (HT3, HT6). That those mid-career teachers are still venturing and looking for other avenues was mentioned by both Yvonne and Neige in the following extracts:

The ones with five years of experience they are still venturing, they want to experience something else, some of them would come back. It's not that teaching was not their choice, but they made up their mind that after five years I will do this or that. They want to experience something else, but sometimes they come back (PM1).

So those with five years, some of them they are looking for avenues to go after their bond is over...they will be sitting exams in other fields, so that if they get good grades they will resign and go (HT5).

This shows that headteachers and policymakers alike believed that those mid-career teachers remained in teaching because of the bonding agreement with the Ministry of Education, and

therefore, it suggests that for them also, similar to the beginning teachers, teaching was not their career choice. On the other hand, others expressed the sentiments that these teachers were the ones who felt stagnant in the system because of a lack of professional development or promotion. The two extracts below are examples of such views:

For the group between five and ten years...for them the main reason will be the lack of progression. They feel that they have been there for five, six seven or eight years; you would have thought that they could follow some short courses, or do their masters, or become a HOD or move up. But for them they have remained stagnant, and with the increase in behaviour problem and the lack of communication, they get discouraged, then they go somewhere else (PM2-Etelle).

And then you have those who have been there for a while, hmm...they'll tell you, 'if I could do something else, I would do, but I think I'm stuck', ok. And then you have among that group some who will be brave enough to leave the profession, because they are not happy (HT1-Dylan).

So the lack of progression both in terms of promotion or further training/professional development, compounded by the behaviour problems, were seen as the main reasons for the mid-career teachers to leave. While these findings shared some similarities with those from the teacher cases, there were some marked differences. For example most of the mid-career teachers in the study considered themselves to be committed and had decided to remain in teaching despite the challenges, and this was not reflected in the findings of the stakeholders.

Experienced teachers

Disparate views about the commitment of experienced teachers emerged from the education stakeholders. Some of the factors influencing experienced teachers level and nature of commitment are different to those identified by the experienced teacher participants in the study. For some headteachers, like Neige:

...those who have been there for so long, they are like the role models for the young ones to follow; they are at school on time, they prepare their lessons, they will find ways to deal with these difficult students, they will do everything in their capacity for their job to work. Their commitment does not rely entirely on what the school is doing, what the management is doing, it comes from within them (HT5).

Similarly, in illustrating the difference between the experienced teachers and beginning and mid-career teachers, Alicia asserted that: "there are people in my school who have been teaching for more than twenty five years and yet the commitment is there" (HT2).

For Alicia the more experienced teachers would go to the school management if they encountered ‘behaviour problems’, or any other problems.

As evident in these two extracts the experienced teachers were seen as more committed, and more reliable with a high degree of professionalism, and they were seen like role models, particularly for the younger teachers. Therefore, according to some of the stakeholders, what the school or the education system does should not have any effect on these teachers’ commitment. However, such views were not shared by all. For example, Dylan pointed to this group of teachers as not being efficacious:

...and then you have your very experienced teachers, 10 or 20 years and over, they will always talk about the good old days, and they will be the ones who cannot accept the changes that have happened. Hmmm...and they will be the ones to tell you though: “well, I’m stuck in this profession, I can’t do anything else”. And the sad thing there is that they won’t try very much, ok. They won’t try very hard, they are disillusioned (HT1).

This therefore portrayed a different view of this group of teachers as feeling ‘stuck’ and being resistant to changes. Feeling ‘stuck’ also emerged from the experienced teacher case in chapter five, but being resistant to changes did not feature among findings from the teacher groups. Didier’s statement added another dimension to the view that the teachers at this stage of the profession were not necessarily committed:

I think also it depends on the individual, the attitude of the individual, how they pursue things, some people have remained uncommitted for a very long time. They will be in conflict with the management. They would not push new ideas. There would be negative response to new ideas. They would challenge the philosophy of the school (HT3).

So, some education stakeholders perceived experienced teachers to be more resistant to change and not innovative in their professional tasks. Such views were also attributed to the notion that such category of teachers would not likely support the goals and mission of the school. There were therefore contrary views among stakeholders on the commitment and professional role of these experienced teachers.

Another idea which was attributed to teachers in this career phase was in relation to the financial benefits for these teachers to remain in the profession. Both headteachers and policymakers commented on the financial benefits of teaching, something which was seldom mentioned among the teacher groups.

Judy pointed out that:

I think if you are in the system for more than ten years, you will lose out if you leave, because after fifteen years you get your gratuity, so maybe that's why very little from this category leave. Then after fifteen years, you get a gratuity after every five years, so it is in a way encouraging them to stay (HT6).

According to Judy, the benefits in terms of gratuity were a likely motivation for this group of teachers to remain in teaching, but whether this implied that these were sustaining their commitment was another question.

Others felt that some of the teachers at this stage 'will tell you that they are starting their own business or a family venture-most of them who leave would say that' (PM1-Yvonne), thus for some, this was or might be a path to early retirement. There were contrasting views from the education stakeholders on the commitment of experienced teachers and such views were not always consistent with what the small number of experienced teachers in this study expressed. Most of the teachers in the experienced case study (Case 3) rated themselves as highly committed and having no firm intention to leave. However, the views of the small number of experienced teacher participants in the study are supplemented by those of the policymakers and headteachers. The contrasting views suggest that teacher commitment and decisions about staying or leaving are issues for experienced teachers as they are for other groups of teachers, but that these are negotiated differently by experienced teachers, such as in relation to early retirement prospects.

Chapter Summary

Overall the findings discussed in this chapter reflect the concerns of both school leaders and policymakers on issues of teacher commitment in the context of secondary schools in Seychelles and the likely consequences on trajectories in terms of retention and attrition. It has been demonstrated that for headteachers and policymakers there are inconsistencies in their perceptions about the different factors that influence commitment of secondary teachers and their trajectories. From the perspectives of policymakers, there was an apparent belief that the responsibility for maintaining teacher commitment and retaining teachers was seen to be with the school. But for headteachers on the other hand, their worries revolved around the lack of support from the system that handicapped their efforts to sustain the commitment of their teachers and retain them. Hence, there was an inclination towards a blaming attitude. Each group attributed blame in different places, for example, headteachers towards teachers,

policymakers and policies/system, while policymakers blamed school leaders and teachers. This reflects deficit thinking or deficit discourses, where particular groups were seen as lacking or deficient. Teachers were presented as deficient in their thinking or attitudes as they were perceived as though they were not doing what they were supposed to.

The focus of discussion points primarily to a decline in commitment among beginning and mid-career teachers, thus affirming the trend which emerged from the experiences of these two groups of teachers in this study. While there were more positive comments about experienced teachers, these were not supported by all stakeholders. Although a number of factors were noted as influencing teachers' commitment at the different stages, there was still this overarching perception by both headteachers and policymakers that commitment was seen primarily as a personal responsibility. They considered that other aspects should not affect the teachers' level of commitment or their decisions to leave teaching. Conversely, from teachers' experiences it was school-related and systemic factors that were seen as more influential in the decline in their commitment, resulting in attrition at the different stages.

Chapter Seven: Discussions and implications

Introduction

This chapter explores the final research sub-question: Why should educationalists be concerned about teacher commitment? I purport that the social constructionist perspective guiding this study has led to a new understanding of the complexity of teacher commitment as constructed by participants within the context of secondary schools in Seychelles. The main focus for the chapter is a framework which draws together the findings and relevant literature to extend current understandings of teacher commitment. Discussion of that framework highlights how my study has contributed to both educational and methodological literature providing some pertinent suggestions for further research.

Complexities of teacher commitment

Personal views and structural influences

The understandings of teacher commitment that were presented by participants in my research, and which emerged from the data, indicated that teacher commitment is characterised as altruism, personal attributes, pedagogical content knowledge and connectedness. The design of this study focused on participants' personal understandings of commitment. The findings have shown that participants describe teacher commitment in relation to personal traits and qualities and in relation to professional knowledge and sense of belonging. However, the findings have also identified that images of 'a committed teacher' that are held by the participants are influenced by contextual factors. Teachers live and work in social and organisational contexts. Contextual factors that influence teacher commitment, and teachers' understandings of commitment, include the broad socio-cultural, economic and political influences that permeate the education system of Seychelles, and the structural and organisational arrangements of schools in which teachers work. These contexts shape teachers' work experiences and influence their ideas of what constitutes a committed teacher and what factors influence teachers' levels of commitment. These contextual details are important for understanding what forms the basis of teachers' decisions to continue in the teaching profession or exit it. Similarly, contextual factors influence school leaders' and policymakers' understandings and help them shape their ideas about teacher commitment as

their beliefs and actions also have a part to play in how teachers view their continuing commitment to their careers in teaching.

The findings of my research reflect a dual concern for the personal and structural factors and provide a different view to some other studies that focus on one or other sphere, such as studies that characterise teacher commitment as having a strong focus on the school as the organisation or on elements external to the teachers themselves (for example, Reyes, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989b; Somech & Bogler, 2002). My research emphasises the complex interplay of personal and ideological spheres, and contextual and organisational influences as a way of understanding teacher commitment.

There is a growing body of literature that reports research studies that acknowledge the multidimensional understandings of teacher commitment (including, Crosswell, 2006; Day & Gu, 2007; Elliott, 2004; Nias, 1981; Tyree Jr, 1996). This study can be seen as making a contribution towards this literature. Many of these studies, though, frame teacher commitment within a particular western, developed nations' context. In contrast, my data is drawn from the context of a small developing nation, the Republic of Seychelles. My research suggests that while there appear to be many similarities between teachers in Seychelles and those in developed countries on ideas about what makes a committed teacher (as reported in literature), there are some things happening for teachers in Seychelles that influence their teaching experiences and commitment to teaching that may not have been considered in studies undertaken in developed nations. In particular, the level of economic development and the limited financial resources in a developing country like Seychelles mean that there are limitations in the resourcing of schools and the professional support and development for teachers. This may not exist to the same extent in developed countries, although resource pressures exist in both developed and developing nations. Resourcing considerations emerged in the data as particular concerns for Seychelles teachers, school leaders and policymakers in their discussions of teachers' work and teacher commitment.

In conjunction with the resource limitations, evidence that transpired from the data shows that teacher shortage is a factor that brings another element of complexity to understandings of teacher commitment in the context of Seychelles. Although teacher shortage is reportedly a common trend in a number of countries (Chapman, 1984; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001b; OECD, 2005b), the extent of teacher shortage in Seychelles presents particular

challenges for Seychelles educators. It shapes teachers' experiences and influences their sense of efficacy and perception of how they are valued. The findings of my study reveal that a shortage of teachers puts additional pressure on Seychelles teachers, who have to cover classes that do not have teachers. This is because in Seychelles, there is an absence of a system that makes provision for relief teachers to provide teaching cover, in contrast to what is usually the case in developed nations. This lack of relief teachers places additional workload on Seychelles teachers, including time pressure relating to lesson preparation or interaction with individual students. It also impacts on those who are heads of departments, as they may have pressure put on them in terms of time to support other teachers. The findings of this thesis show that such situations contribute to a low sense of efficacy and a decline in commitment of Seychelles teachers who were participants in the study.

The findings also indicate that the changes in education in Seychelles brought about by new government policies and by what some participants referred to as 'social ills' of the country, are putting additional pressure on teachers, particularly in the secondary sector. Day and Gu's (2010) work recognises the effects of all new developments on the work of teachers. The findings of my study resonate with Day and Gu (2010) and show that despite being a small developing nation, Seychelles also appears to be experiencing the attitudinal shifts which are reported in other nations as part of the global trends. The data from my study show that in responding to these changes the education system is designing a number of interventions to improve standards and to cater for the individual needs of students, and these are putting additional pressure on teachers' work. Although research shows that reforms in many countries come with additional pressure for teachers (see for example, Bartlett, 2004; Beijard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000; Day & Gu, 2010; Day et al., 2007), in Seychelles one of the particularities is that these reforms often come without sufficient consideration of resources, teachers' capacities and workload. Most teachers and headteachers in the study expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of training or structural preparation before the introduction of new reforms. One further concern which emerged from the data was the impact of these global developments on students' behaviour and attitudes, their lack of respect for teachers and parents' lack of interest in their child's education. These factors have impacted on teachers' levels of commitment and have been important considerations when deciding whether to stay or leave teaching.

My study makes an original contribution to research on teacher commitment in developing countries, which is an area lacking research attention (as indicated in Chapter Two). Two studies on teacher commitment were located in developing countries. However, the findings of my study are somewhat different to those reported in literature from these other two studies. The foci of these studies were also different to mine. The two studies undertaken in developing nation contexts were quantitative studies (Joolideh & Yeshodhara, 2008; Mohan Raju & Srivastava, 1994). They both used questionnaires to investigate variables of teacher commitment. In the findings of the Delhi study, Mohan Raju and Srivastava (1994) concluded that the characteristics of the profession, along with work related personality and desire to improve one's skills, were contributing to teacher's commitment to the profession. In comparison, the Indian and Iranian study (Joolideh & Yeshodhara, 2008) found that Indian teachers had better organisational commitment in the affective and normative components of commitment, whereas Iranian teachers were found to have better organisational commitment in the continuance commitment. The contextual factors that were attributed to these findings were the differences in salaries, inferior facilities and a lack of job security for the Iranian teachers, as compared to teachers in India, where job security was high. Both were limited in the extent to which they could explore factors in-depth or generate new ideas about commitment (that were not predetermined variables for quantitative analysis). A unique contribution of my study is the generation of factors that influence teacher commitment for teachers in developing countries from qualitative interviews.

Interconnection between commitment, career trajectories and retention

This study contributes to literature on the connection between teachers' career stages, trajectories and teacher commitment. This connection presents another dimension of the complexity of the phenomenon of teacher commitment. This research supports findings from literature that argue a need to be cautious about suggesting that teachers move through career stages in a particular order or that progression is linear (Day et al., 2007; Fessler, 1995; Huberman, 1993). Although teachers' commitment waxes and wanes over their teaching career, there is some merit in separating out what it is like to be a beginning teacher, a mid-career teacher and an experienced teacher in order to understand commitment to teaching in terms of experience level. By looking at each of these stages, particular factors that may influence commitment for individuals at different points in their career have been revealed, as well as discrepancies between the views of teachers and others (school leaders and

policymakers) about what influences teacher commitment and teachers' decisions to stay or leave the profession (see chapter six). The separation into career stages also means that actions can be targeted to particular groups, for example, beginning teacher induction support.

The majority of the newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in this study displayed a sense of disillusionment and reality shock, which is similar to the findings of a number of research studies relating to the experiences of beginning teachers (see for example, Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Veenman, 1984). They appeared to be more vulnerable and more at risk of leaving the profession than the mid-career and the experienced teachers, which shows similar trends to studies from other contexts (including, Cameron et al., 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; OECD, 2005b). However, the data from this study reveal that, from the perspectives of the NQTs and based on their descriptions of their teaching experiences, the reality shock was mainly attributed to the level of students' misbehaviour and the heavy workloads, amongst a range of other factors. These two factors in particular were contributing to a decline in their commitment, according to their talk about their level of commitment and their teaching experiences. However, from the perspective of headteachers and policymakers, the disillusion and reality shock experienced by NQTs was differently attributable to the beginning teachers not being suited to the job and having made a wrong career choice.

For the mid-career teachers in this study, most of them were thriving with new challenges resulting from new and expanded roles, which were shaping their professional identities as teachers. They welcomed new challenges and continually reflected on ways to do better, which in turn sustained their connection, purpose and commitment to teaching. What was also apparent was a degree of uncertainty among some of these teachers in relation to their decisions to stay or leave teaching. Some of the reasons for their uncertainties were the perceived deterioration of disciplinary standards and increased discipline problems in schools, a feeling of stagnation due to the lack of continuous professional development and the lack of support to help them respond more effectively to students and students' behavioural needs. But from the point of view of headteachers and policymakers, there was a level of scepticism in their perceptions of teachers' commitment within this career stage, because according to them many teachers at this career stage were planning to leave upon the fulfilment of their bonding agreement.

The experienced teachers in this study are characterised by a strong degree of resilience, having experienced a number of challenges in teaching and having chosen to stay in the profession. They expressed a lot of pride in their tasks, which they believed sustained their commitment. Similar to other teachers from other career stages, they also referred to issues such as students' behaviour and attitudes, poor leadership, lack of parental support, shortage of teachers and new reforms as having a negative impact on their commitment. However, they also expressed certitude in their decisions to remain in teaching. Contradictory views emerged from headteachers and policymakers about this group of teachers. While most of these education stakeholders expressed their satisfaction with the commitment of experienced teachers, some headteachers and policymakers questioned these teachers' commitment, suggesting that they were not really strongly committed and did not really have the positive attitude that is associated with being committed to teaching. This reveals the different ideas among the different educator groups about what defines and constitutes teacher commitment.

What has been revealed in the data is that teacher retention and their decisions to stay in or leave teaching are complex. It is not just a case of low or high commitment leading to decisions to leave or stay. Other factors, such as family circumstances and unexpected opportunities, may play a part in decisions to stay or leave the profession. Also emerging from the study is an appreciation that there are variations in the understandings of different educator groups about what makes a committed teacher. Thus the phenomenon of teacher commitment is complex, and understanding the phenomenon means engaging with a range of conceptualisations of teacher commitment and with the complex interactions between teacher values and experiences, career trajectories, and political issues relating to teacher retention.

Teacher deficit discourse

The prevalence of a deficit discourse of teachers has added another layer of complexity to understanding teacher commitment in this study. Discourse from a Foucauldian sense relates to a set of beliefs, assumptions and practices that define and limit what can be said (Foucault, 1972), and in this sense discourses are seen as “semiotic ways of construing aspects of the world (physical, social or mental) which can generally be identified with different positions or perspectives of different groups of social actors” (Fairclough, 2009, p. 164). In the context of my study, a deficit discourse positions teachers as lacking commitment. It reflects the views held that the current teaching force is of a lower standard than the more experienced

teachers of previous generations, and tends to attribute responsibility for deficiencies to the teachers themselves.

A need to make sense of this deficit thinking or deficiency discourse became apparent through some of the entries in the reflective journals, particularly after some of the interviews with the stakeholders. Below are two extracts from my reflective journal which show how I was trying to understand what these participants were saying in relation to deficit thinking and the complexities that these thoughts presented.

Journal entry

I interviewed the second headteacher today. Compared to the first one (Dylan), Alicia is a relatively new headteacher, so it was interesting to have some comparisons with someone who have [sic] been there for five years. Both headteachers have indicated complexity of teacher commitment. It looks like there is a pattern emerging. It would seem that both of them are pointing to a deficiency on the part of newly qualified teachers. Something that I need to probe further in the coming interviews with stakeholders. On the other hand Alicia also talked about the lack of recognition of teachers' work, but I appreciated the openness of Alicia in acknowledging that she is also at fault sometimes when she has no choice but to put additional pressure on teachers. She was really getting at the system deficit in terms of teacher shortage.

Reflective journal, 21st September 2010

Journal entry

Neige is quite a young headteacher and she is relatively new as a headteacher, but she has been a secondary teacher for a number of years. She precipitated to talk [sic] about the newly qualified teachers; it seems that she was really not too happy with this group of teachers in her school. She noted that the newly qualified teachers lack the commitment as compared to the more experienced ones. This lack of commitment as I see is once again attributed to some deficiency in terms of their personal attributes and even their choice of teaching as a career. But Dylan did note that even if experienced teachers are still in the profession it does not mean that they are committed—how complex is that?

Reflective journal, 30th November, 2010

This deficit discourse is reflected and sustained to some extent by policymakers, headteachers and teachers themselves. This is not to say that particular individuals or groups of participants necessarily have negative views of teachers, or that they deny that structural factors are influences on teacher experiences and commitment, but that a deficit discourse is discernible

in the talk and assumptions made about teacher commitment across the participant groups in the research.

Policymakers in the study see their roles as ensuring that a structure is in place for the successful implementation of the Education Policy, and their interests and professional obligations mean that they see the situation regarding teacher commitment in particular ways. Teachers tend to be positioned as acting either in accordance with or contrary to policy goals with regard to prescribed competencies and standards in students' test results. Making broad claims or generalisations about the views of policymakers is outside the scope of my research because I interviewed only a few policymakers. However, the interests and responsibilities of the four policymakers who participated in this study, whose role it is to develop, support and implement government policy, can be seen as aiding the sustaining of a deficit discourse in relation to teachers whose actions may not seem to be consistent with policy intentions.

In general, the headteachers in the study ascribe teacher commitment to a given quality of the individual, believing that the individual either has this quality or does not. The assumption of the six headteachers in the study is that being committed does not depend on the school leadership or the system, but rather is a responsibility of the individual teacher. At the same time several headteachers are sympathetic towards the difficulties that teachers face, and they acknowledge some of the structural problems which are causing teachers not to perform to their potential. Some of these are related to working conditions and policy issues which are external to the teachers. Thus a deficit discourse of teachers coexists with a range of ideas about structural limitations and challenges that influence teachers' work experiences. The teachers themselves contribute to this deficit discourse. Some of the teachers point to other teachers in the school as not being able to cope, both in terms of classroom management and pedagogical content knowledge. Others point to the attitudes and behaviour of teachers in and outside the school, and portray teachers as lacking adequate values to be a 'role model' for their students. The assumption is that some teachers themselves are contributing to the low status of the teaching profession in the eyes of the public.

The teacher deficit discourse may lie (partly) behind teachers' feelings that they are undervalued or underappreciated. The general view which emerged from teachers is that their work is not being valued. This lack of recognition is also associated with the low image of teachers and teaching. But some of the concerns expressed about teachers may be grounded

in the realities of lowered selection standards and entry qualifications and may reflect real and legitimate concerns about workforce standards. Thus the understandings of this deficit discourse reveal a level of complexity of teacher commitment in the context of secondary education in Seychelles which requires further investigation.

The findings also reveal contradictory ideas that people hold at the same time, which contribute to this complexity of understandings of teacher commitment and of the factors that are influencing the commitment of teachers. From the perspective of policymakers and headteachers the ‘problem’ of retention tends to be seen as located with teachers (amongst a range of other factors) and their attitude or lack of commitment. Headteachers and policymakers also strongly identified systemic and structural problems and challenges. This shows that it is not all about blaming teachers. What the data indicate is the extent of the complexity of teacher commitment, which is seen as requiring constant negotiations between the personal and professional dimensions of teachers selves and their teaching tasks, and the school, the education system and the national context in which teachers live and work.

Towards a framework for teacher commitment

The study contributes to a framework for understanding the multidimensional and complex nature of teacher commitment, particularly in the context of a developing nation, and this can also be expanded to other contexts as the issues being discussed are of concern for many countries.

The conceptions of commitment presented by participants in this study and the range of factors that influence teacher commitment have been synthesised to illustrate its multidimensional construction. Figure 15 (below) illustrates the complexity of teacher commitment as reflected in the findings of this study.

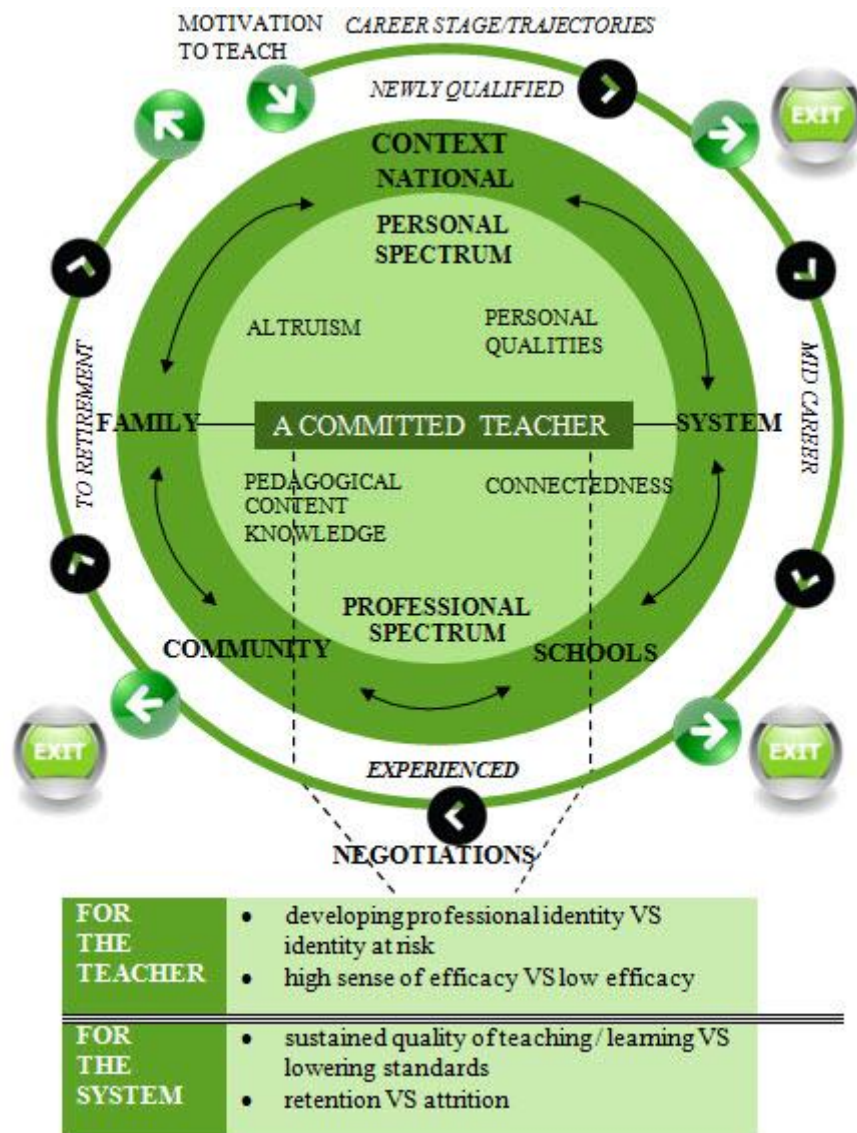


Figure 15: Complexity of Teacher Commitment

The inner circle represents the core of teacher commitment depicted by the participants' experiences and understandings. This core conception is made up of the personal and professional spectra delineated into four different categories: altruism, personal qualities, pedagogical content knowledge and connectedness. These categories form an integral part of teachers' personal and professional identities. The personal spectrum reflects the personal identities of the persons who enter the profession, their beliefs, values and personal qualities. The professional spectrum relates to what knowledge and skills they value in order to perform their roles in the profession.

Teacher commitment therefore reflects the personal and the professional selves of teachers. But these do not exist in isolation from the socio-cultural, systemic and school contexts

within which teachers live and work. These contexts are represented by the outer circle. It reflects the national context through the social aspects of the lives of teachers and their professional lives within the context of the education system and in their schools. The wider context situates teachers within their community and home environments, but it is also attributed to the social context of the students that they teach. It also reflects the working conditions of teachers within the education system and the school environment.

The outer layer represents the different career stages, from the initial motivation to teach through to the retirement stage. This is represented by the outer line with arrows which indicate that the teachers' commitment fluctuates throughout their teaching career depending on their different professional and life experiences. This leads to different trajectories in terms of whether they continue in teaching or they exit the profession. So teachers may opt to exit at different career stages depending on the strength of the core of their commitment (as located in the inner circle) and the conditions presented by the context of society, their personal circumstances, the education system and schools.

Teacher commitment is therefore how teachers construe and construct their experiences based on their beliefs, values, motivations and aspirations as well as their pedagogical content knowledge and skills. This commitment is continually being shaped and reshaped in response to working conditions, new policies, personal circumstances and the socio-cultural context in which teachers work. These negotiations can result in different consequences for the teacher and for the system as indicated by the arrow down. Teachers who possess the dimensions indicated as the core of a committed teacher and who feel supported by the particular school and system context will likely develop their professional identity and a high sense of efficacy which will sustain their commitment and entice them to remain in the profession (notwithstanding particular and unexpected opportunities that may arise and draw individual teachers away). If these conditions are not present or are weak, these teachers will likely experience a low sense of efficacy and their professional identities will be at risk. That teachers' professional identities are negotiated throughout their career based on the different working conditions, life circumstances and socio-cultural context is well supported in literature (see, for example, Beijard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000b; Day & Gu, 2010; Day et al., 2007; Lasky, 2005; Sachs, 2001; Zembylas, 2003a). The findings of this study show the interconnection between teachers' personal and professional identities, their sense of efficacy

and teacher commitment, not within a cause and effect view, but rather as a constant negotiation mediated by other contextual factors.

The story of Lise provides an example of the unique negotiation of a range of personal and professional factors that influence teacher commitment. Lise (Case 1) joined teaching not as her first career (see transcript in Appendix N). She provided two reasons for her entry into teaching: 1) for the work conditions because she had a child, and 2) she was drawn to the training opportunity because, when she joined the Diploma in Education, the prospect was to proceed overseas after successful completion to obtain a Bachelor of Education (BEd) qualification. Although she felt competent in the subject she was teaching and with the training that she had locally (to Diploma level), there were circumstances in teaching that she was not happy with, such as the perceived misbehaviour of students and lack of respect for teachers (which is a national contextual factor as it was portrayed as a broad social condition). She was also disgruntled with the perceived inconsistency of school leadership and their lack of professionalism (school context), as well as the uncertainty of overseas training (that she did not actually get to go overseas to train, which she saw as a systemic factor). Lise was therefore negotiating her commitment and her decision either to stay in teaching or to leave based on the interplay of all these factors. Apart from her positive feelings of confidence in the subject and that the job fitted her lifestyle, her negotiations tended to highlight negative factors pertaining to teacher commitment. If all these factors persist the likelihood that Lise will remain committed to teaching is low.

The strength of this framework is that it is one with a level of flexibility and is not prescriptive; therefore, it might be considered valuable for understanding teacher commitment in other contexts. For example, it suggests that the understandings of teacher commitment start with the core values of teachers, but that these core values, beliefs and personal identities might be differently represented based on the socio-cultural context of the study.

Methodological contribution

This study represents a snapshot in time for these groups of participants within the context of public secondary schools in Seychelles. Not all school contexts are represented, so it is not possible to make broad generalisations for every teacher in Seychelles. Nonetheless, I can raise issues and suggest common threads or understandings that have emerged from these

participants across the different school contexts in which they work, and which are likely to exist for teachers beyond the study who work in similar school contexts or whose career trajectories are similar to those of the teacher participants. What is clear for the teachers represented in this study is that both personal and contextual factors affect their commitment to teaching. Furthermore, understanding of issues like recruitment, attrition and retention which are concerns for policymakers in many countries could be further informed by the findings of this study.

Another major contribution of the study is the use of phenomenography as the principal research approach and framework. As outlined in chapter three, phenomenography is a relatively new research approach, which aims to find variations in ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Marton, 1981). Its use within this study has been challenging, particularly when combined with other approaches, but worth the effort for the view and understanding of the concept of teacher commitment that it has afforded. One of the challenges of phenomenography is the process of iteration that is required before finalising the categories of description. The final categories that emerged went through different stages of classification and reclassification until a satisfactory set of fewer categories was obtained, while ensuring that all the views found a fit under a category. These four categories delineate teacher commitment as altruism, personal qualities, pedagogical content knowledge and connectedness, thus allowing me to elicit variations in perceptions of teacher commitment in a way that has not been discussed previously. This new understanding is not only related to the four main categories of descriptions, but also identifies dimensions of the variations within the categories as well as the relationships between categories in the form of the outcome space (see Chapter Four). Therefore, understandings of teacher commitment through the use of phenomenography have provided a more comprehensive view of the concept of teacher commitment as it is understood by different participant groups and teachers in particular.

A case study design with social constructionist underpinnings was used to complement the phenomenographic approach. Whereas phenomenographic studies are mainly interested in uncovering variations in experiences and perceptions of a phenomenon, case studies are used to add more depth to the understandings of lived experiences of particular groups of teachers (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). The social constructionist orientation has allowed the context of participants, their relationships and their particular circumstances within their

personal and professional lives to be considered. Having teachers from different career points as participants in the study has expanded the breadth of the study by making connections between teachers' experiences at different career stages and their potential career paths. The inclusion of teachers who had left the profession has provided insights into the reasons for a decline in commitment at each career stage which eventually led to resignation. Furthermore, the incorporation of education stakeholders in the study has illuminated new understandings of the various discourses affecting performance of teachers and retention. The study has taken into account the relationships and interactions between these groups, which have brought a different dimension to the data to that which focuses only on teacher groups. Thus this allows a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of teacher commitment and how this is enacted in the context of a developing nation. These multiple dimensions have not commonly been considered in past research on teacher commitment.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for policy, schools, teacher education and teachers in the context of secondary education in Seychelles and more broadly. This section explores these implications in response to the final research question, indicating that a broad range of educationalists should be concerned about teacher commitment.

For policy and policymakers

As outlined in chapter one, the Government of Seychelles has demonstrated its commitment to the provision of quality education for the population. This has been evident through the allocation of the yearly budget, where Education has been receiving the second highest percentage after Health over the last five years. The engagement is also apparent through the recent review of the Teachers' Scheme of Service and the number of reforms that have been introduced over the last five years (see chapter one). Nevertheless, the findings of this thesis have revealed tensions between the roles of policymakers and the school leadership, which permeate the professional lives of teachers and influence their levels of commitment. Teacher participants show awareness of these tensions when they suggest that policymakers need to be on the field and to see for themselves what is happening instead of trying to run the schools based on written frameworks from developed countries. But the system in Seychelles is highly centralised compared to developed countries where decentralisations have been strongly featured in the last decade (Day et al., 2007) and where greater economic resources present greater advantages.

Notwithstanding this, being a small country with a small population may present certain favourable conditions compared to large developing or developed countries. One such potential benefit is the physical distance and time involved in travelling to and from the different schools, which may be easier in small countries (depending on administrative structures), thus enabling policymakers to have first-hand information on what is happening in schools. Also relationship distances may be shorter, with fewer degrees of separation between teachers and those who make education policy. The small size of the population means that closer relationships are potentially possible and there is a shorter chain of administrative operation between schools and the education policy leaders than might be expected in countries with much larger populations and more complicated and layered administrative structures. Getting closer to schools (literally and figuratively) would potentially allow these policymakers to have constant discussions with school leaders and teachers. This sort of relationship could allow professionalism to grow and support a change of mind-set, particularly taking into account the local and cultural context of the schools. Building on these advantages would bring about a more constructive approach towards adopting a collaborative partnership in order to sustain teacher commitment, and reduce attrition of secondary teachers.

There was general agreement among headteachers and teachers in schools that policymakers introduce new policies for schools without consulting teachers. A few examples were given in this study, such as the new Behaviour Policy and differentiated instruction. The lack of consultation about the policies might explain teachers' frustrations in implementing such policies, frustrations which can have a detrimental effect on their commitment to teaching. As teachers are at the receiving end of policies, their greater involvement in the decision-making process will potentially allow them to take ownership of these new policies and ensure more effective implementation. Adopting a collaborative approach will provide a platform for discussions with school leaders and teachers about any new policies or reforms before they are implemented. This has been advocated in previous research (for example, Croll, Abbott, Broadfoot, Osborn, & Pollard, 1994) and appears to be something that could be considered in order to address these concerns. It may help to build an environment where educators (teachers, school leaders and policymakers) can work together to try to resolve some of the challenges of maintaining and sustaining a committed teacher workforce.

Professional development has been highlighted as a weakness of the system. In contrast to the teachers in the VITAE study (Day et al., 2007) who were satisfied with the continuous professional development across the different career stages, teachers from different points in my study were concerned about the paucity of professional development programmes and opportunities for teachers professional learning. The importance of teachers' professional learning and its likely positive impact on teacher commitment has been widely discussed in literature (including, Cameron et al., 2006; Crosswell, 2006; Day, 2004; Kane & Mallon, 2006; Nias, 1981; Tyree Jr, 1996). While acknowledging the limited financial resources in the context of Seychelles, a possible idea would be for policymakers to negotiate with the new University of Seychelles (which became operational in 2010) to run seminars, conferences, debates and other sessions to address the professional learning needs of teachers. What the findings and literature suggest is that giving attention to continuous professional development for teachers is likely to have a positive impact on teacher commitment, although this may not provide an immediate impact and would depend on the nature and focus of the professional development.

In the context of the highly centralised education system of Seychelles, school leaders find it easy to blame policymakers for not allocating the necessary budget and other required resources for the proper implementation of the curriculum. Whilst budgets are important as enabling devices, this study has shown how the issues of teacher commitment and retention are complex, and it suggests that different parties have different (and limited) views on these issues. It is more a matter of understanding these complexities and looking differently at the 'problems' in order to find ways of addressing the challenges.

Both policymakers and headteachers shared some negative or deficit views of teachers in general and NQTs in particular. The general comments were that most new teachers join teaching for external reasons, not because of their passion for the profession. Although it would be desirable to have only those who are passionate about the profession joining teaching, there is a need to be realistic about the context of secondary education in Seychelles and the current recruitment trends (refer to Chapter One for recruitment issues and standards). There is a strong likelihood that those who will enter the teaching profession in the future will not solely comprise the highest academic achievers, or be only those who have a passion for the profession. As the shortage of teachers persists, the system might have to make the most of who is willing and available to enter a teaching career. Increasing the support for NQTs

would help to create a teaching force that feels more valued and less disgruntled. While this would not stop teachers leaving the profession, it might encourage more to stay and more to enter.

Furthermore, although the strategies for recruitment are beyond the scope of this study, the data show a complexity in commitment and career trajectories that suggests a need to think of alternative training in order to attract more people in the profession. The variations in career trajectories displayed by participants, with NQTs representing teachers who undertook training straight from school and others who undertook a career change to enter teaching (and were therefore older or more mature entrants to the profession), suggest that the pool for teacher education and teaching is potentially a broad one. Thus, attention needs to be given to understanding different pathways to teaching and how people with different life experience might be supported into and through the profession. In the current selection procedures the Selection Committee has to lower the entry criteria every year in order to get enough trainees into teacher education. Even this does not allow enough candidates in to fill all teaching vacancies, especially in shortage subjects (for example Mathematics and Science). The relevance of this for teacher commitment is that having sufficient numbers of teachers to fill teaching vacancies will reduce the risk of work overload, a concern which was strongly indicated by teachers and headteachers alike.

The data of this study further show the general views of teachers that they are not appreciated and are undervalued, which resonates with the findings of other studies (see for example, Hall, D., & Langton, 2006; OECD, 2005b). Teachers need to feel that their work is appreciated. The findings point out that Seychelles teachers are working in difficult working environments with limited resources and sometimes poor infrastructure. So there needs to be a change of attitude towards teachers starting from the system that would filter to the public. Valuing teachers and their work could potentially provide a boost to their sense of efficacy and their identities, which will help to develop commitment and resilience in the longer term. However, this study suggests that there is no magic solution—the situation relating to teacher commitment and retention is complex and positive change will be necessarily incremental.

For schools and school leaders

Among the challenges for schools which emerged from the findings is that of retaining and supporting beginning teachers. Despite the lack of an established nationwide induction

programme, schools need to put in place structured programmes to support new teachers. That new teachers are often thrown in the deep end after their initial training has been affirmed by this study. They report that they are given the same number of classes as the more experienced teachers and very often given the most difficult classes with little support. Although there are heads of departments who provide support, and some will do this well, but in the experiences of NQTs in the study, because of the shortage of teachers, this does not happen enough. With heavy teaching timetables, these beginning teachers are not able to observe the more experienced teachers. As discussed in chapters five and six, most newly qualified teachers as well as headteachers and policymakers noted that the beginning teachers are very committed when they start, but this commitment is very short-lived as teachers become disillusioned and most of them choose to leave. The challenge then is for school leaders and policymakers to find ways to support the NQTs. An example of support that may help sustain these teachers' commitment is comprehensive induction programmes. This has been advocated by a growing body of research (such as, Cameron, 2009; Cameron et al., 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975) and appears to be something that could be considered in Seychelles.

Another aspect of teaching where support might be further developed relates to behaviour management. Issues of students' misbehaviour and lack of motivation to learn emerged as the dominant factor influencing a decline in commitment, and a low sense of efficacy, and is one of the main reasons for teacher attrition. Both teachers and headteachers, and one of the policymakers, commented on the new Code of Conduct which had been introduced in schools. The comments related to how the policy was not fulfilling its function of dealing with misbehaviour and how it was putting additional pressure on teachers. Studies conducted in western nations also identified students' misbehaviour as a main concern for teachers and schools, particularly at secondary level (including, Blase, 1986; Day et al., 2007; D. Hall & Langton, 2006). The difference between these contexts and the context of my study (a developing nation) is the highly centralised system of education as compared to decentralised systems – that is, in western nations schools have the authority to develop their own school-wide behaviour policies (Axup & Gersch, 2008; George, White, & Schlaffer, 2007). In Seychelles the policy is developed centrally in a 'one size fits all' manner. Henceforth a potential strategy to address the problem in Seychelles could be to empower schools to design their own behaviour policy, which might prove to be more successful, as these policies will be responding to that particular school community and environment. It will also allow

teachers to participate in this process thus making them more willing to enforce such policies. On the other hand schools need to look beyond the individual students' misbehaviour and investigate the ways that school, curriculum and teaching practices may contribute to enhance student participation and performance thus sustaining teachers' commitment. Concomitantly, identifying the root of the problem might prompt new strategies. Based on the data of this study, it appears that students' behaviour and attitude is a national problem – that is, teacher participants from schools across the country view students' misbehaviour as a significant factor that influences teachers' self-efficacy, enjoyment of the job, and commitment to teaching. If this is the case, then a concerted effort is needed, with the participation of schools, Ministry of Education and other Ministries and agencies in order to find possible solutions.

The findings show that school leaders contribute towards a deficit view of teachers. A different way of thinking is required on the part of school leaders which will allow a view of the complexities involved in the work of teachers. This is not to say that leaders do not value teachers. They do. However, this study has shown that headteachers' perceptions of teacher commitment and those of teachers themselves differ. Teachers are negotiating a range of complex personal, school related and system related factors which influence their commitment and trajectories, and also impact on the development of their professional identities as teachers. The majority of the teachers in this study are not planning to leave because of their strong belief in themselves that they can make a difference in the lives of the students and their hope that circumstances may change for the better. In other words most of these teachers are committed despite the range of school, system and societal factors. School leaders need to have an awareness of this understanding of commitment and build on it in order to gain a better idea of the needs of teachers so that their commitment can be sustained.

For teacher education and teacher educators

The findings show that the realities of practice are different to expectations – NQTs in particular seem to experience a form of reality shock, thus point to likely discrepancies in teacher education programmes. The view of teacher commitment which emerged from my study could provide a valuable platform on which to build teacher education programmes, particularly in relation to such dimensions like teacher identities, efficacy, resilience and trajectories. Covering these notions in the teacher education programmes would potentially provide student teachers with opportunities to explore how their experiences are shaped by

what happens in classrooms and by their own beliefs (an approach that is supported by K. M. Borman, Mueninghoff, & Cotner, 2009; Bullough, 1997; Danielewicz, 2001; Day & Gu, 2010; Patterson & Purkey, 1993). It will theoretically allow reflections about the discontinuities and tensions this may create for them, which they need to negotiate in their professional lives. Such concepts are not currently part of the teacher education programme in Seychelles. Apart from allowing these student teachers to know ‘self’, such reflections will further give scope for a better understanding of changes within the context of schools and society, thus providing a more realistic view of schools and the conditions in which teachers work. Teacher education needs to develop awareness among teachers on how they become resilient.

For teachers

One policymaker in the study noted that it is a cultural given that teachers in Seychelles have the tendency to wait for ‘everything to come from above’, instead of trying to make things better for themselves. This is linked to the teacher deficit discourse discussed earlier, positioning the problem with the teachers. However, it also suggests that the teaching culture in Seychelles (underpinned by a centralised system) may lack a sense of, and emphasis on, professional autonomy and a responsibility to initiate amongst teachers. There is an apparent need for teachers themselves to acknowledge such assumptions and try moving away from this cultural given that ‘others’ will and should take action and responsibility, but not them. Teachers need to be conscious of the changes taking place around them and engage in professional learning communities working towards a change of mindset both at personal and public levels.

The findings have shown that collegial support is among the factors sustaining commitment of teachers. This could be an impetus for the development of learning communities, where teachers can support each other. Such practices are commonly discussed in studies of teachers’ work (including, Cameron et al., 2006; Day et al., 2007; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989b), and have the potential to increase the teachers’ sense of efficacy and their professional identities and help construct a more positive image of teachers.

Suggestions for further research

The study was conducted within the context of public schools in a small developing country. Therefore the portrait of committed teachers that has been revealed by the findings of this

study is specific to the particular location, grounded in the historical, cultural, economical and political context of Seychelles. Acknowledging the boundaries of my study allows me to see the scope for further research, in the context of Seychelles, but also extending to other developing countries and a wider context.

As this was a first study of its kind in the context of Seychelles a number of areas can be identified for further research in order to obtain a more thorough picture of the concerns surrounding commitment of secondary teachers. Firstly, the study has examined the experiences of teachers and the perceptions of school leaders and policymakers, but the number of participants selected for the study was somewhat limited. Hence, there is scope for extension of the study to include a larger number and range of teachers, school leaders and policymakers. There is scope for inclusion of a range of other groups in subsequent research studies. The inclusion of the students' voice in such a study of teacher commitment would have allowed a better understanding of the complexity of commitment from the receiving end. It would therefore be advantageous if further studies were to be carried out among the secondary student population to gain insights on their perceptions of committed teachers. The findings have indicated the crucial role of parents and the school community as factors influencing teacher commitment. So parents as participants or non-education stakeholders could be a targeted population for future studies of teacher commitment. It has been highlighted by the stakeholders in this study that a number of newly qualified teachers opted to stay overseas after their training or would leave their teaching jobs in the Seychelles to go and teach overseas. Thus such participants would also have been a group to consider for this study.

The findings have shown a greater tendency for newly qualified teachers in particular to leave the profession. A more focused study on beginning teachers is needed in order to obtain a better understanding of the reasons for the vulnerability of this group in terms of commitment and retention. In addition, while this research has explored teacher commitment at this particular point in time, a longitudinal study would allow a more extensive examination of the trend of teacher commitment across teachers' career trajectories. Such a longitudinal study could also make use of other data gathering tools such as classroom observations, which would provide richer data for explaining commitment trends.

The study raises concerns about teacher experiences, trajectories and retention in developing countries. A similar study in other developing nations with similar characteristics to Seychelles would provide comparative data and identify any commonalities across countries. The issues of commitment, trajectories and retention which are discussed in this study are also of particular relevance to developed nations (see, for example, Day & Gu, 2007; Day & Gu, 2010; OECD, 2005b, 2009). Therefore, further research covering a range of countries, both developed and developing could be useful in finding similarities and differences and may lead to the sharing of good practices that support teacher commitment.

Conclusion

To conclude I turn to the overarching research question of this study: What is the potential of the concept of teacher commitment for understanding teacher pathways within and beyond the profession? As illustrated in the framework which emerged (see Figure 15) from the findings of the study, teacher commitment is complex and multilayered. However, this complexity lies not only in the phenomenon, but also in the understanding of it. What these findings highlight is that seeing teacher commitment as something that is a personal quality of, determined by, and the responsibility of teachers themselves is an over-simplification of the complex interactions of personal values, structural arrangements and particular circumstances that may influence teacher commitment and teachers' decisions to stay or leave teaching. Similarly, seeing teacher commitment purely as a matter of structural support is an over-simplification.

It is argued that understanding teacher commitment means taking into account the personal and professional spectra of teacher commitment, and not assuming that these teachers possess all the faculties required for commitment without having the structure and environment necessary to help teachers sustain this commitment and to retain them in the profession. Addressing issues of teacher retention presupposes an understanding of the complexity of teacher commitment. Such understandings can help to honour teachers and their fundamental roles in the education system in order to improve teacher commitment and retention and strengthen the quality of teaching in Seychelles.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Geographical and historical background of Seychelles

Geographical Background

Seychelles archipelago consists of 115 islands in the Western Indian Ocean. It is situated 4° south of the equator and occupies an area of 454 square kilometres. The islands are made up of two different types; granitic and coralline.

The last census in 2011 confirmed a population of about 89,000 inhabitants (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011, p. 8). The majority of the population reside on the main island of Mahé (77.5%), followed by Praslin with 8.5%, La Digue, Silhouette and outer islands with 3.7%. The population is of mixed ethnicity with people from three continents; Europe, Africa and Asia. There are three official languages spoken in Seychelles. These are English, French and Creole, of which Creole is the most widely used. The main economic activities are tourism and fisheries.

Historical background of Seychelles

The Seychelles islands were discovered by European navigators at the beginning of the 16th century on their way to India. However, it is believed that Arabs navigated in the Indian Ocean earlier than Europeans and they might have spotted the islands before the 16th century. The first recorded landing on the island was in 1609 by a British ship.

Seychelles did not have an indigenous population. However, it is believed that pirates visited the islands to hide their treasures before the arrival of Europeans to colonise the place. Records indicate that Seychelles had a strategic location in the Indian Ocean because of the interests of European nations in India. At the beginning of the 18th century the French, who were already occupying neighbouring Mauritius Island, sent expeditions to Seychelles with the intention to start a colony.

Below is a brief timeline showing the main events since the start of colonisation until the adoption of the current constitution.

1742 and 1744	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> French explorer Lazare Picault was sent on two expeditions to Seychelles by the then Governor of Mauritius, Mahé de la Bourdonnais. His mission was the exploration of the islands and to provide detailed descriptions to the Governor. On his second expedition in 1744 he named the main island Mahé in honour Governor Mahé de Labourdonnais.
1756	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The formal taking over of Seychelles Islands as a French colony. This was on 1st November, under the French envoy Nicholas Morphey. A stone of possession was placed on the main island and the islands were named Seychelles honouring the French Financial Minister.
1770	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first group of inhabitants settled in the Seychelles. This consisted of 28 people of French origin and some slaves from Africa, Madagascar and India. This was followed by other settlements in 1771 and 1772.
1778	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The foundation of the town in Seychelles named 'L'Etablissement du Roi' under the command of Lieutenant Charles de Romainville.
1794-1810	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British and French rivalry in the Indian Ocean. A series of battles took place in Seychelles. From 1794 to 1810 Queau de Quincy (French Commandant) signed a series of capitulations to the British. In 1810 the islands were ceded to the British along with Mauritius.
1815	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British colonisation of Seychelles was made official by the Treaty of Paris.
1835	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abolition of slavery in British colonies including Seychelles
1900-1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British used Seychelles as a place for political exiles. A number of political leaders who were leading resistance groups against British rule in their respective countries were sent to Seychelles, (e.g. from Ghana, Cyprus, Uganda, Malaysia).
1903	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seychelles became a crown colony no longer a dependency of Mauritius. The first Governor was appointed-Sir Ernest Sweet-Escott.
1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Changes in Legislative council (initial steps towards political awareness).
1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of political parties. There were two main parties: the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) and the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP). The latter was fighting for independence of Seychelles, while the SDP wanted to remain a dependency of Britain.
1970 - 1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of Constitutional Conferences took place in London to discuss independence of Seychelles.

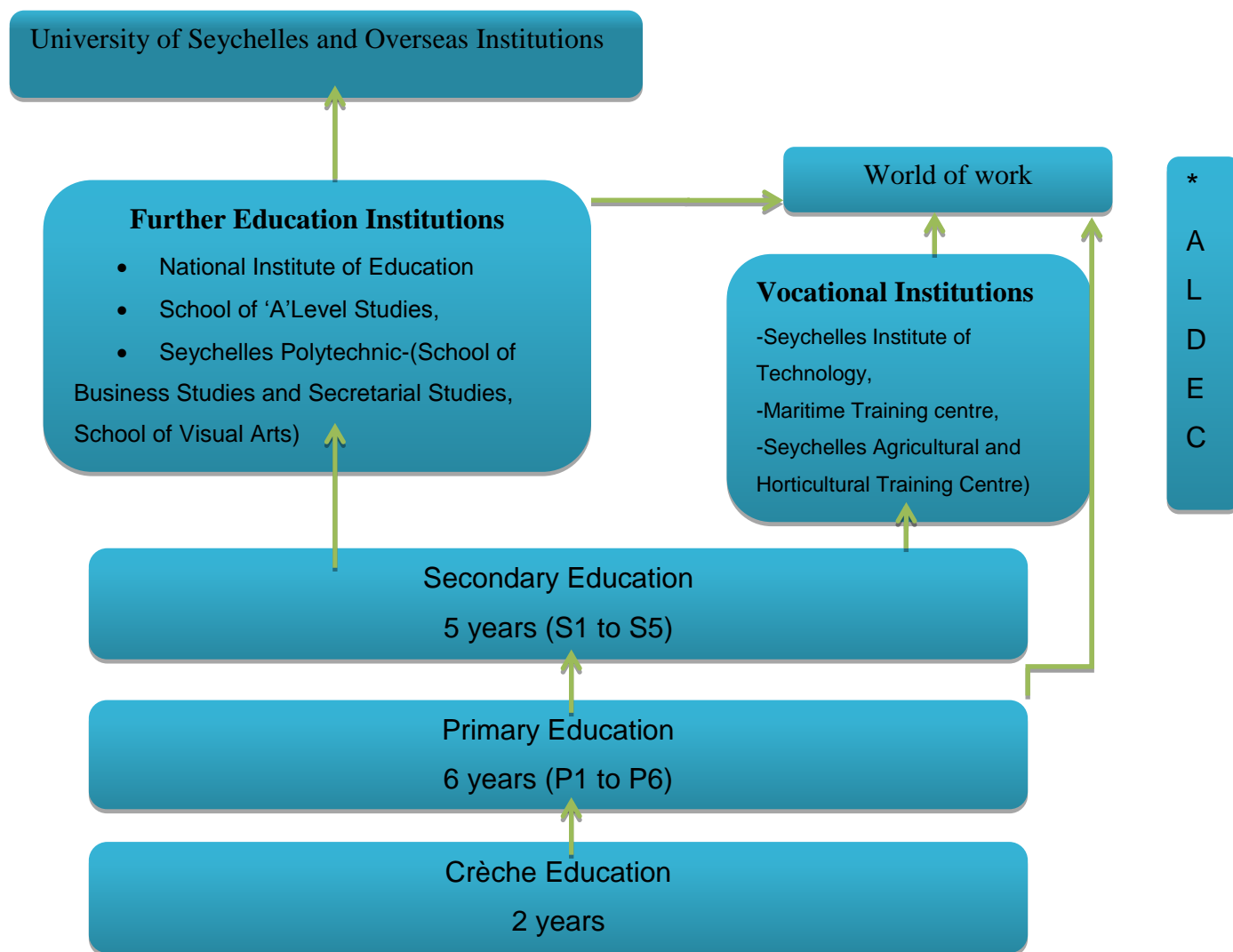
1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seychelles attained independence from Britain on 29th June. The first Republic was established with Mr James Mancham as the President.
1977	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pro-socialist Government was established as a result of a coup on 5th June under the leadership of France Albert Rene.
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new constitution was drawn for the Second Republic. Major changes took place in all aspects of the country's development.
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiparty was re-established and a new constitution was developed for the Third Republic which is still operational today.

Appendix B: A timeline of the developments in Education in Seychelles from colonial days to 1998

1839	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Anglican Missionary Society started the first school, although it lasted only until 1942 and it was mainly for ex-slaves.
1851+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opening of a number of Roman Catholic
1861	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrival of the first Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny to start a girls' school
1867	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A boy's school started by the French Christian Brothers. Some small rural schools started. Church schools started receiving a small government money as grants
1872	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Board of Education was set up
1875	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A boarding school for freed slaves was set up
1904	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary schooling started by the Catholic Mission
1938	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Director of Education was appointed and a Board of Education was established. English became the medium of instruction instead of French as had been in previous years.
1946-1956	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new Director of Education was appointed to implement the new the new British Education Act of 1944 for the provision of universal secondary education. A ten-year development plan was drawn with the collaboration of the Catholic Church.
1950s-1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of new schools were built in different districts by the Catholic Mission. A small teacher training college was opened (1945). Full-time courses were only offered from 1958 onwards. A new fee-paying convent was opened for girls and St Louis College for boys became known as the Seychelles College. These two schools were the only grammar schools until after independence.
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were no major reforms after the attainment of independence in 1976. Changes in Education structures and policy started after the coup of 1977. Major reforms in education started to be implemented (that was a stepping stone into the establishment of comprehensive education in Seychelles).The reforms included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The introduction of free compulsory education for nine years for all children -The introduction of the zoning policy -The adoption of a new national language policy and the introduction of the creole language as a medium of instruction for the first four years of primary school. -The setting of the National Youth Service, a two year residential

	<p>programme at the end of the ninth year of school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The setting up of a new centralised curriculum development unit -Building of new schools and upgrading of existing ones -The setting up of a national assessment system • A new school structure was set up. Secondary education was incorporated in the primary schools up to primary nine, when students were supposed to join the National Youth Service.
1983	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new school structure was set up. • The introduction of the Seychelles Polytechnic as the main institution for post-secondary education.
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another significant reform took place mainly in the secondary education structure. This was the reduction of the National Youth Service to one year and the re-organisation of secondary schools. • Regional secondary schools were set up the secondary years were from one to four, thus bringing compulsory education to ten years.
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The setting up of the School Improvement Programme. (An initiative taken by the Ministry of Education for further strengthen the effectiveness and standard of education).
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The establishment of another reform that represented a watershed for education in Seychelles, particularly secondary education (Ministry of Education, 1998). • This saw the phasing out of the National Youth Service. • The regional secondary schools were re-organised and expanded to include secondary five, which replaced the one year of National Youth Service. • These reforms also included the reorganisation of the National Curriculum in state schools as well as the merging of the School of Education and the Curriculum Development Section of the Ministry of Education to form the National Institute of education.

Appendix C: A Diagrammatic representation of the structure of the school system of Seychelles



*ALDEC-Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre

Appendix D: Statistical Information on student's performance in International examinations

A comparison of student grades in IGCSE Exam results for State schools in core subjects
from 2008-2011

	Grades A*/A combined		Grades B/C combined		Grade D		Grades E/F/G combined		Ungraded		Total candidates
	Total candidates	% of candidates	Total candidates	% of candidates	Total candidates	% of candidates	Total candidates	% of candidates	Total candidates	% of candidates	
English 2nd Language											
2011	51	5.30	372	38.67	167	17.36	342	35.55	30	3.12	962
2010	45	4.87	351	37.99	157	16.99	344	37.23	27	2.92	924
2009	81	8.77	379	41.02	185	20.02	259	28.03	20	2.16	924
2008	8	0.94	375	43.86	184	21.52	276	32.28	12	1.40	855
Mathematics											
2011	12	1.66	117	16.23	95	13.18	380	52.70	117	16.23	721
2010	7	1.21	146	25.30	94	16.29	276	47.83	54	9.36	577
2009	11	1.69	175	26.92	95	14.62	302	46.46	67	10.31	650
2008	12	1.90	146	23.14	98	15.53	284	45.01	91	14.42	631
Combined Science											
2011	0	0.00	4	0.89	34	7.57	325	72.38	86	19.15	449
2010	0	0.00	8	1.97	28	6.90	285	70.20	85	20.94	406
2009	0	0.00	16	4.11	37	9.51	290	74.55	46	11.83	389
2008	0	0.00	5	1.17	25	5.84	316	73.83	82	19.16	428
Coordinated Sciences											
2011	15	6.20	78	32.23	44	18.18	105	43.39	0	0.00	242
2010	7	2.79	83	33.07	39	15.54	121	48.21	1	0.40	251
2009	10	3.73	122	45.52	58	21.64	78	29.10	0	0.00	268
2008	12	3.80	99	31.33	64	20.25	139	43.99	2	0.63	316

Source: Education Statistics (2008-2011)

**Appendix E: Statistical information on number of entrants into Secondary
Teacher education courses from 2004 to 2010**

*NIE in-takes, drop outs and graduates on the different two-year Diploma
Secondary programmes from 2004 to 2010*

Subject	Year																	
	2004-2005			2005-2006			2006-2007			2007-2008			2008-2009			2009-2010		
	I	DO	G	I	DO	G	I	DO	G	I	DO	G	I	DO	G	I	DO	G
English	5	-	5	11	2	9	8	-	8	18	8	10	19	5	14	23	12	11
History/ Geography	5	1	4	10	-	10	9	2	7	15	3	12	14	9	5	8	5	3
Mathematics	-	-	-	9	1	8	-	-	-	5	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Science	12	4	8	-	-	-	5	-	5	5	1	4	4	-	4	4	1	3
French	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	4	6	7	-	7	14	7	7	10	-	10
PSE	6	-	6	5	-	5	-	-	-	9	1	8	8	4	4	-	-	-
Technology & enterprise	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	15	3	12	17	3	14
The Arts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	4	13	-	-	-
Grand Total	28	5	23	35	03	32	32	6	26	59	14	67	91	18	59	62	21	41

Key:

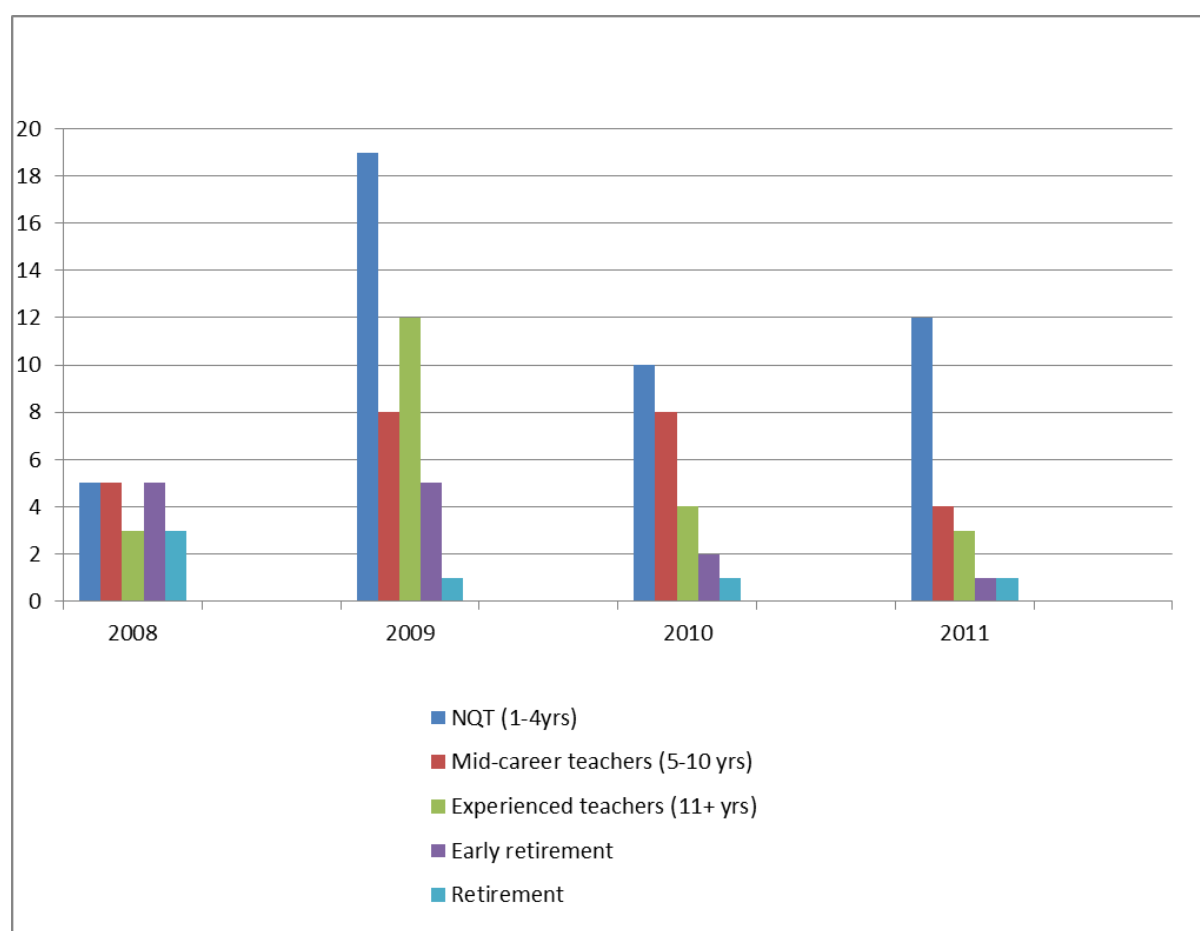
I – In-takes

DO – Drop Outs

G - Graduates

Source: National Institute of Education Annual Reports (2004-2010)

Appendix F: Graph showing trend of teachers leaving the profession from 2008 to 2011



Source: Education Statistics, (2008-2011)

Appendix G: Number of vacancies and recruits by subject from 2004 - 2008

Secondary vacancies by subject from 2004 to 2008

YEAR	SUBJECTS									
	English	French	Maths	Science	Social Science	T.E	I.T	P.S.E	Religion	P.E
2004	3	2	1	1	5	4	-	-	2	-
2005	3	-	2	-	6	2	1	-	2	-
2006	12	2	8	11	8	2	3	3	3	-
2007	3	12	5	6	2	9	7	-	2	-
2008	5	-	4	5	10	8	3	1	2	-

NO OF TEACHERS WHO JOINED THE SERVICE IN THE DIFFERENT SUBJECT AREAS FROM 2004 TO 2008

YEAR	SUBJECTS									
	English	French	Maths	Science	Social Science	T.E	I.T	P.S.E	Religion	P.E
2004	17	11	6	7	12	6	-	5	2	2
2005	10	9	8	11	9	4	-	6	3	-
2006	15	1	9	15	12	4	1	5	1	-
2007	13	5	10	16	14	6	7	5	2	-
2008	15	5	14	14	18	3	1	-	1	2

Appendix H: Interview schedules

(i) Semi-structured interview schedule for teachers

Exploring commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles

Information for teachers:

I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am a PhD student of the University of Canterbury and I am conducting a study on factors influencing the commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles. As noted in your information letter the interview will be recorded and it will last for approximately one hour.

Commitment is considered to be one important element in the provision of quality education and it influences teacher effectiveness. This interview will look mainly at your perceptions on commitment and the factors that are influencing your commitment to the profession.

1. Tell me about the jobs/careers you have had.
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. Why did you decide to become a teacher? What attracted you to a career in teaching?
4. What have you found good, positive, difficult?
5. What makes you feel good and not so good about teaching? (Prompt for personal (attitudes, motivation) and external (family institution, systems).
6. When you started out as a new teacher what was your dream of what teaching would be like? How has the reality matched up with your dream? Why do you think it has been like this? (prompt for the personal and external).
7. What does a committed teacher look like, what does he/she do? (Prompt for ideas about what commitment means to participant; images that are conjured up).
8. Tell me about you current level of commitment to teaching. (Why?)
9. What are factors that you think encourage your high, low or middling level of commitment? Think about a time when you felt highly committed. Describe it. What was going on? Why did you feel highly committed? (Repeat for low commitment).
10. What factors would you consider cause high/ low/middle level of commitment among other teachers? (Prompt for personal, attitudinal, organisational)
11. How long do you intend remaining in teaching?

12. What would make you decide to stay longer or leave teaching?
13. What do you think influences teachers at your level of experience to stay in or leave the teaching profession?
14. Tell me about the support you received as a new teacher.
15. What is it about you that has made you survive or thrive in teaching? (Prompt on whether participant sees self as a thriver or survivor and why).
16. How and to what extent do other people support you in your job? (Prompt on possible groups-family, friends, teaching colleagues, head-teacher, others).
17. What would you imagine a well-supported workplace to be like? What would help to create a well-supported workplace?
18. What key messages do you think I should convey to policy makers, head-teachers or others from my study? (Prompt on ideas about things that might positively influence the commitment of teachers and what policy makers could do about this).
19. What would you advise a person who wants to take up teaching as a career? (Prompt for prospective secondary teachers, young people leaving school, more mature people from other jobs or careers and reasons why they would give such advice).
20. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not mentioned earlier about the commitment of teachers?

(ii) Semi-structured interview schedule for teachers who have left the profession

Exploring commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles

Information for teachers who have left the profession:

I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am a PhD student of the University of Canterbury and I am conducting a study on factors influencing the commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles. As noted in your information letter the interview will be recorded and it will last for approximately one hour.

Commitment is considered to be one important element in the provision of quality education and it influences teacher effectiveness. This interview will look mainly at your perceptions on commitment and the factors that influenced your commitment to the teaching profession.

The proposed questions include:

1. Tell me about the jobs/careers you have had.
2. Why did you decide to become a teacher? What attracted you to teaching?
3. How long did you stay in teaching?
4. What did you find good, positive, difficult?
5. What made you feel good and not so good about teaching? (Prompt for personal (attitudes, motivation) and external (family institution, systems).
6. When you started out as a new teacher what was your dream of what teaching would be like? How has the reality matched up with your dream? Why do you think it has been like this? (prompt for the personal and external).
7. What does a committed teacher look like, what does he/she do? (Prompt for ideas about what commitment means to participant; images that are conjured up).
8. How committed did you feel in the profession? (why?)
9. What are the factors that you think encouraged your high, low or middling level of commitment? Think about a time when you felt highly committed. Describe it. What was going on? Why did you feel highly committed? (Repeat for low commitment).
10. What factors would you consider cause high/low/middle level of commitment among other teachers? (Prompt for personal, attitudinal, organisational)
11. What were the factors that influenced your decisions to leave the teaching profession?

12. Do you miss anything about teaching? Do you wish you'd stay? [Prompt for reasons for regret or no regret].
13. Tell me about the support you received as a new teacher.
14. How and to what extent did other people supported you in the job? (Prompt on possible groups-family, friends, teaching colleagues, head-teacher, others).
15. What would make you come back to the teaching profession?
16. What do you think influences secondary teachers to stay in or leave the teaching profession in general?
17. What would you imagine a well-supported workplace to be like? What would help to create a well-supported workplace?
18. What key messages do you think I should convey to policy makers, head-teachers or others from my study? (Prompt on ideas about things that might positively influence the commitment of teachers and what policy makers could do about this).
19. What would you advise a person who wants to take up teaching as a career? (Prompt for prospective secondary teachers, young people leaving school, more mature people from other jobs or careers).
20. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not mentioned earlier about the commitment of teachers?

(iii) Semi-structured interview schedule for headteachers.

Exploring commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles

Information for headteachers:

I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am a PhD student of the University of Canterbury and I am conducting a study on factors influencing the commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles. As noted in your information letter the interview will be recorded and it will last for approximately one hour.

Commitment is considered to be one important element in the provision of quality education and it influences teacher effectiveness. This interview will look mainly at your perceptions on commitment and the factors that are influencing commitment of secondary teachers to the profession.

1. How long have you been a head-teacher in this school?
2. How long have you been a teacher prior to becoming a head-teacher?
3. How would you characterise teacher commitment?
4. What does a committed teacher look like, what does he/she do?
5. What factors would you consider foster high commitment among teachers? (Probing on the factors: in general and in your school)
6. What are the factors that undermine or negatively influence the commitment of teachers? (Probing on the factors: in general and in your school).
7. How would you describe the changes in the levels of commitment of teachers at different stages of the profession?
8. In what way do you think you are trying to improve commitment of teachers in your school?
9. What would you consider the factors which positively or negatively influence your efforts in enhancing teacher commitment?
10. What do you think influences teachers to stay in or leave the teaching profession at different stages? (Refer to the three stages separately).
11. How would you describe the status of teaching as a profession in Seychelles?

12. What would you advise a person who wants to take up teaching as a career? (Prompt for prospective secondary teachers, young people leaving school, more mature people from other jobs or careers).
13. What sort of changes/reform would you like to see in order to improve commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles?
14. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not mentioned earlier?

(iv) Semi-structured interview schedule for policymakers

Exploring commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles

Information for policymakers:

I thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I am a PhD student of the University of Canterbury and I am conducting a study on factors influencing the commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles. As noted in your information letter the interview will be recorded and it will last for approximately one hour.

Commitment is considered to be one important element in the provision of quality education and it influences teacher effectiveness. This interview will look mainly at your perceptions on commitment and the factors that are influencing commitment of secondary teachers to the profession.

1. What is your role and responsibility in your position? How does your role influence the work of teachers?
2. Have you been a teacher?
3. At what stage did you look beyond the classroom? Why did you move away from the classroom? When?
4. How would you characterise teacher commitment?
5. What does a committed teacher look like, what does he/she do?
6. What factors would you consider foster high commitment among secondary teachers in Seychelles? (Probing on the factors)
7. What do you think are the factors that undermine or negatively influence commitment of secondary teachers? (Probing on the factors).
8. What do you think influences teachers to stay in or leave the teaching profession at the different stages?
9. What do you think are some of the reasons young people are choosing/not choosing teaching as a career?
10. How would you comment on the status of teaching as a profession in Seychelles?
11. What sort of changes/reform do you think should be put in place in order to sustain or enhance teacher commitment in Seychelles?

12. Is there anything you would like to add on teacher commitment that we have not mentioned earlier?

Appendix I: Ethical Clearance

Ethics Approval



Ref: HEC 2009/44/CoEdn

23 October 2009

Odile De Comarmond
School of Maori, Social & Cultural Studies
College of Education
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Odile

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "Exploring factors influencing commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Missy Morton
Chair
Educational Research HEC

"Please note that Ethical Approval and/or Clearance relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research."

Appendix J: Information Letter



30th November, 2009

_____: **Secondary Teacher Statement of Disclosure and Informed Consent**

Research Study

Exploring commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles

I am a PHD student currently studying at University of Canterbury under the supervision of Dr Jane Abbiss (Deputy Head of School, School of Maori, Social and Cultural Studies), and I intend to investigate the commitment of secondary teachers in the Seychelles.

The purpose of the study is to explore the factors influencing the commitment of secondary teachers of Seychelles at different stages of the teaching profession along with the perceptions of other stakeholders on teacher commitment and the implications for secondary education will identified. The research will make recommendations for prospective reform in secondary education and for further research in this area. The result of such a study will contribute to the enhancement of education in general thus contributing to the improvement of standards and development of a learning society. While the study is specifically focused upon Seychelles, its significance extends to international academic and professional communities. Many of the issues set to be addressed in the study are of international relevance and interest.

The study design invites the participation of secondary teachers, secondary head-teachers and officials from education management. The experiences of secondary teachers are central to the study. The study will include individual interviews scheduled to take place in the Seychelles from July 2010 to January 2011. I would be grateful if you would agree to participate in the study in your capacity as [a secondary teacher]. Please be reassured that I am conducting this study as a PhD student and not as an official of the Ministry of Education.

If you agree to take part in this research, it will involve an individual interview lasting approximately one hour with the possibility of a follow-up focus group interview. I would like to tape the interviews. You would be given the transcript to read and provide comments and/or clarifications. In the case of focus group interviews, this would relate to your contributions. All information obtained will be treated with the strictest confidence and will only be reported in the thesis and related articles. You will not be identified in any way in the presentation of the results of this study as pseudonyms will be used. Documents will be securely stored in locked cabinets in the researcher's office at the National Institute of Education while in Seychelles and at

the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, and in password protected electronic storage. At the end of the study, data will be kept securely stored for seven years and after wards destroyed.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate you will be free to withdraw from the study at any time by informing me verbally or in writing.

The project has been approved by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) of the College of Education of the University of Canterbury. The University requires that all participants be informed that any question about the project may be directed to me or to my supervisor, whose contact details are provided below.

Ms Odile de Comarmond
PhD Candidate
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch
Tel: +64 3 364 2987, Extn. 44917
email: oad10@student.canterbury.ac.nz

Dr Jane Abbiss (Research Supervisor)
Deputy Head of School
School of Maori, Social and Cultural
Studies University of
Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch 8140
Tel: +64 3 364 2987, Extn. 44465 or
email - jane.abbiss@canterbury.ac.nz

Any complaint concerning the manner in which the research project is conducted should be addressed to the Chair of the ERHEC. The contact details are as follows:

Dr Missy Morton
Chair,
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
School of Educational Studies and Human Development
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch
Tel: +64 3 345 8312
email - missy.morton@canterbury.ac.nz

Provision has also been made for a local contact to receive participants' complaints and pass them on to the Chair of ERHEC. The details of the contact person are as follows:

Mr Alex Souffe
Director
National Institute of Education
Mont Fleuri Mahé
Seychelles
Tel: (248) 283304
Email: asouffe@yahoo.co.uk

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign and return the attached consent form by 1st December 2009.

Thank you for considering this request.

Yours sincerely

Odile de Comarmond (Ms)

-
1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
 2. Complaints may be addressed to:
Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH

Telephone: 345 8312

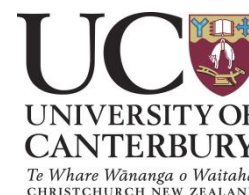
Consent form

College of Education

School of Literacies and Arts in Education

Tel: +64 3 343 9606, Fax: +64 3 343 7790

30th November, 2009



Project Title: Exploring commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles

Consent Form - secondary teachers

I understand the aims and purposes of the research study undertaken by Odile de Comarmond. The study has been explained to me and I understand the information that was given to me on the information sheet.

I understand that my involvement will include an individual interview with the possibility of a follow-up focus group interview, which will be recorded.

I understand that all information will be treated in strictest confidence, that participants will remain anonymous and that no information will be given to other researchers or agencies without my consent. I understand that within these restrictions, the results of the study can be made available to me at my request and that I can request additional information at any time.

I understand that the study will be carried out as described in the information statement, a copy of which I have retained. I realise that it is my decision whether or not I accept to participate.

I am aware that I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reason for withdrawing. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction.

I have read the information sheet and consent form. I agree to participate in the study.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

-
1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
 2. Complaints may be addressed to:
Dr Missy Morton, Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH Telephone: 345 8312

Appendix K: Letter to the Ministry of Education

30th November, 2009

Principal Secretary Education
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box 48
Victoria,
Mahé
Seychelles

Dear Madam,

Subject: Research in Education in Seychelles

I am a PHD student at the University of Canterbury. I am presently undertaking a study on the commitment secondary teachers in Seychelles under the supervision of Dr Jane Abbiss, (Deputy Head of School, School of Maori, Social and Cultural Studies). It is expected that this study will explore the factors influencing the commitment of secondary teachers of Seychelles at different stages of the teaching profession as well as perceptions of other stakeholders and identify the implications for secondary education. The research will make recommendations for prospective reform in secondary education and for further research in this area. The result of such a study will contribute to the enhancement of education in general thus contributing towards the improvement of both quality and retention of teachers, and the development of a learning society.

I am therefore seeking the permission of the Ministry of Education to conduct this study, which will consist of mainly individual interviews. The following participants have been identified for the study: Ministry personnel – Principal Secretary, Director General for Schools, one Secondary education Coordinator, Head-teachers of five secondary schools to represent each region and the islands, fifteen secondary teachers divided into the following cohorts: (i) first year as a Newly Qualified teacher (NQT); (ii) five years of teaching experience, (iii) teachers of over ten years experience, and one other cohort of six teachers who left the profession at each of the above mentioned stages.

Letters of consent will be forwarded to all participants. The collection of data has been scheduled for the period between July 2010 and January 2011.

All information gathered will be treated with the strictest confidence and securely stored. No person or school will be mentioned in the thesis or subsequent reports and/or articles by name or in such a way that they can be identified.

The project has been approved by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee of the College of Education of the University of Canterbury.

If you have any queries or would like clarification on any parts, please contact me. My contact details are as follows:

Ms Odile de Comarmond
PhD Candidate
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch
Tel: +64 3 364 2987, Extn. 44917
email: oad10@student.canterbury.ac.nz

If you have any other concern, or you would like to talk to an independent person about the project you can contact any of the following:

Dr Jane Abbiss (Research Supervisor) Deputy
Head of School
School of Maori, Social and Cultural Studies
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch 8140
Tel: +64 3 364 2987, Extn. 44465 or
email - jane.abbiss@canterbury.ac.nz

Dr Missy Morton
Chair,
Educational Research Human Ethics
Committee
School of Educational Studies and Human
Development
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch
Tel: +64 3 345 8312
email - missy.morton@canterbury.ac.nz

I thank you in anticipation of a most favourable reply. I will contact you by telephone for follow-up while awaiting the official letter.

Yours sincerely,

Odile De Comarmond
University of Canterbury

Appendix L: Journal entry

29th July 2010

Today I had my first interview with Lise. This took place at the school where she was working, because this is what she wanted. The school is noisy and we had to go to an empty science laboratory. Although there were other participants in the same school for the other cases, for confidentiality purposes I did only one interview in one school at a time and when I came to the school tried my best for the other teacher participants not to know.

I went in with mixed feelings and I am coming out still with mixed feelings, maybe more than when I got in. Is this normal, I wonder! Something at the beginning made me please though.

Lise expressed her trust in me in saying: "I would just like to go on record that one of the main reasons I accepted to participate [in your study] is because I know I can trust you and I know I will not hear my voice being broadcast or whatever." This is a good sign and surely encouraging for a first interview.

There were certain expressions that I recorded during the course of the interview which is somewhat worrying, but at the same time allows for more probing. For example, Lise gave a frowning face as the question of whether she would remain in teaching or not was asked. She seems to be really disappointed with the changes in the training policy. Will this have a repercussion on her decision to stay in teaching? After all, one burning question that comes to my mind is: is she really committed to teaching or was she really in it for the opportunities that teaching could offer?

It looks like there are many more negative elements in what has been telling than positive, e.g. students' behaviour, resources, parents' attitude towards their children's learning, absenteeism of teaching staff, school leadership, training, code of conduct. These are the things that have been coming up and some of the things that have been said are really not good to hear, e.g. parents coming to school to swear at teachers, the lack of safety for teachers. And to add up to my earlier question, the uncertainty in the response to the question of how committed she felt also brought another dimension of reflection to my head. There was a long pause before she answered. That said I also need to note something, the fact that this interview is a snapshot in time, so it depends at the point that she is in within her career and all the other things going on in the school and in the country for that matter, e.g. the new code of conduct, the systemic decisions pertaining to training, social ills of the country and her personal circumstances.

I am looking forward to the second interview curious to see what comes out.

Appendix M: Example of phenomenographic coding

The main challenge of phenomenographic coding was managing the large amount of data to generate an initial structure for the organisation of ideas. This was overwhelming at first.

I first organised the perceptions that emerged from each case by allocating a number to each idea. Below are examples from case study one to three.

Case Study One: Newly Qualified teachers		
Phenomenographic analysis	Potential categories from interview data	Transcript N0/page
Perceptions of a committed teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having good attendance 2. To be devoted to students/care for students 3. To be punctual 4. To be consistent 5. Be always prepared for class/good planning 6. Be ready to listen to students 7. Be humble 8. Willingness to work after school hours 9. Support the school 10. One who perseveres 	1(3) 1(3), 2(3), 3(2), 5(2) 1(4), 4(2) 1(4) 2(3), 4(2) 2(3) 2(3) 3(2) 3(2) 5(2)

Case Study Two: Mid-career teachers		
Phenomenographic analysis	Potential categories/quotations	Transcript N0/page
Perceptions of a committed teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the love for the profession 2. To be devoted to students/care for students 3. Uses different strategies to be able to reach out to the students 4. Be present all the time 5. Will find ways to deal with problems 6. Go the extra mile 7. Would read and research around his/her subject 8. Try to be better at what he/she does 9. Ensures the students are learning 10. Finds resources 11. Takes time to prepare good lessons 12. Willingness to come to work 	C2:1(2) C2:1(2) C2:1(2) C2:1(2), C2:4(2) C2:2(2) C2:2(2) C2:2(2), C2:4(2) C2:2(2) C2:3(3) C2:3(3) C2:3(3), C2:4(2) C2:4(2)

Case Study Three: Experienced teachers		
Phenomenographic analysis	Potential categories/quotations	Transcript N0/page
Perceptions of a committed teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Believes he or she can succeed 2. Knows his/her subject well 3. Tries to be present all the time 4. Delivers good lessons for all students to benefit 5. Willing to work after hours 6. Well prepared for all lessons/takes time to prepare lessons 7. Love students without discrimination 8. To have teaching at heart 9. Should not give up easily 10. Is resilient to obstacles 11. Ready to share expertise 12. Conscious about other people's feelings 13. Ensures that students are well-educated, nurtured, cared for 14. Be involved in the well-being of the school/feel part of the school 15. Can listen to students 16. Undertake research in the subject 17. Committed to your students 	C3:1(2) C3:1(2) C3:1(2), C3:2(2), C3:4(2), C3:6(1) C3:1(2), C3:4(2) C3:2(2) C3:2(2), C3:4(2), C3:5(2), C3:6(1) C3:2(2), C3:3(2) C3:3(2) C3:3(2) C3:3(2) C3:3(2) C3:3(2) C3:3(2) C3:3(2) C3:3(2), C3:6(1) C3:4(2) C3:4(2) C3:5(2)

The same exercise was conducted with case study four and the stakeholders' transcripts. The statements were then grouped by referring to the pages from the transcripts. This was necessary to ensure that the grouping depicts what the participant was trying to express. I first came up with twelve main headings. These were further sorted and grouped under seven preliminary categories. The number of occurrences per category was recorded and these occurrences were further consulted from the transcripts so as to find the possibility of refining these preliminary categories as they were overlapping and were too many to manage

The table below shows the seven preliminary categories and the number of occurrences per case. This exercise was repeated using the headteachers' and policymakers' interview transcripts.

	Number of occurrences per case			
Findings/Categories	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
1. Teacher commitment as having the interest of the students at heart	4 out of 5	3 out of 5	5 out of 6	4 out of 6
2. Teacher commitment as being present all the time	3 out of 5	3 out of 5	4 out of 6	3 out of 6
3. Teacher commitment as having good planning and preparation	2 out of 5	2 out of 5	4 out of 6	1 out of 6
4. Teacher commitment as developing professionally and willingness to improve		2 out of 5	3 out of 6	1 out of 6
5. Teacher commitment as being resilient	1 out of 5	2 out of 5	3 out of 6	
6. Teacher commitment as dedication to the school.	1 out of 5	1 out of 5	2 out of 6	1 out of 6
7. Teacher commitment as the love for the profession		1 out of 5	1 out of 6	1 out of 6

Through reiteration and reorganisation of the preliminary categories I managed to collapse a few ideas under major themes. After several attempts, a set of four re-organised categories were reached as follows:

Category 1: Teacher commitment as moral purpose

Category 2: Teacher commitment as dedication to the school

Category 3: Teacher commitment as level of preparedness

Category 4: Teacher commitment as resilience

However, as the analysis progressed these four categories were further refined and the finalised four categories (as illustrated in chapter four) were:

- Category 1: teacher commitment as altruism.
- Category 2: teacher commitment as personal qualities.
- Category 3: teacher commitment as pedagogical content knowledge.
- Category 4: teacher commitment as connectedness.

From these categories, the referential aspect of each category was identified. From the referential aspect the variations were discerned and these formed the structural aspects or the variations of understanding of teacher commitment (see chapter four).

Appendix N: Interview transcript

Participant 1- Case Study 1-Interview of 29th July 2010

R- Good morning Lise and thank you for accepting to participate in this study. I'm here as a student and not in the capacity of a staff of the Ministry of Education. As indicated in the information sheet the purpose of this study is to explore factors influencing commitment of secondary teachers in Seychelles. Your participation is voluntary and everything will remain confidential and nothing will identify you as a participant. Feel free to express yourself on the questions that will be asked. You can withdraw from the study anytime if you so wish. You can answer in English but if you wish to clarify anything in creole, you may do so.

R:-Tell me about the jobs or careers you've had.

Lise: Before I start, first of all I would to thank you for choosing me as a candidate for your study. I would just like to go on record that one of the main reasons I accepted to participate is because I know I can trust you and I know I will not hear my voice being broadcast or whatever.

Hmmmm....Before joining teaching, just after my A'level studies I taught in a primary school for about three years. Then I felt teaching was not my...my... my field of choice, so I applied for a job at the SBC, which I was accepted. It was then that I went to SBC as a journalist. I worked there for 6½years. Then again after that time I felt I wanted to do something different. I just had a child and I felt that the conditions there were not really conducive to my new lifestyle. That is when I heard about the Ministry of Education looking for teachers, I knew I would be accepted there, so I went for an interview.

R-So how long have you been teaching now?

Lise: I have been teaching now for two terms

R: That is as a newly qualified teacher with a Diploma

Lise: Yes

R- Why did you decide to become a teacher or what attracted you to a career in teaching?

Lise: I decided to become a teacher because; first of all I felt there was a need for teachers in the country. I knew I could do it, I knew I would get the job easily also. I knew that I wouldn't have to go through many interviews or exams; I know I could do it. So I joined the teaching profession. What attracted me to the career honestly is... I saw prospect. Because at the time when I decided to join teaching there was the prospect of going abroad for further

studies in Australia, after studying at the NIE and teaching for one year. So I thought it would be a good opportunity for me. I would be getting a degree. I felt that it would be a good way forward for me.

R- And what have you found good so far? What have you found positive and also what have you found difficult, not so good?

Lise: Hmmm... What I found good is that so far I have not regretted my decision for....for joining the teaching profession. I like... I like quick evaluation of my work. Teaching is a good opportunity for me to give out to students, then when I pick up an exercise book or when I ask questions I can see what.... I can evaluate if what I have given has been understood...has beentaken in by students. Hmmm....this is a very positive thing for me. It helps me to evaluate myself and also build up on my weaknesses. What i found a bit difficult....it was a big disappointment for me when the degree course was no longer in place. I was disappointed because that was one of the.....the push for me to join teaching. Hmmm... and difficult also is the bit about the students' attitudes in the school. Students, sometimes you feel you have to learn for them, as if you have to force them to learn. This is a big difficulty-the attitudes of students. And also there are many constraints in teaching. There is a shortage of resources, things you have to uses on a daily basis, it is very difficult to get.

R: So what makes you feel good or not so good about teaching? Ok we talked about the profession itself, now if we look at the personal motivation and other aspects

Lise: Anyway what makes me feel good is the fact that I can evaluate myself . I can assess what I have taught. And also it helps me to stay young. It makes me feel young, I know what the students are talking about, what language they are using. I feel I am learning new things every day from them. At home....I like saying I'm a teacher....I feel proud to say I'm a teacher. My family also they kind of look up to me sometimes, they think I know more than them because I'm a teacher. Hmmm..that's about it..

R: What can you say about the institution?

Lise: As a Newly Qualified teacher I feel I get the appreciation I deserve.

R: So when you started out as a new teacher what was your dream about what teaching would be like and how has the reality matched up with your dream? Why do you think it has been like this?

Lise: Anyway, before joining teaching I knew that it would not be an easy task, however, once I had made up my decision to join, I thought I could take up the....the challenge. I didn't expect anything superficial or...or perfect. I kind of had an idea of what to expect.

However, what hit me a bit was the fact that students' attitude towards learning was not so positive. In most classes I go to I would say, I feel that I have to double my effort to try and make students understand why they have to study, why they have to come to school, why this subject is important, why this time for studies is important. I think students are here....come to school, most students, not all but most students-the majority of students feel that their parents send them to school, so they have to come. They don't...they're not taking their studies as something that that is theirs. They think that 'I come to school....the teacher can say whatever she wants I take in what I can or whatever. This kind of... I did not think it was that bad. I did not think it was that bad.

R: You knew what to expect, but not to that extent you mean?

R: Now what does a committed teacher look like?

Lise: I feel a committed teacher should try his or her best to be there for all the lessons. Be present for all the lessons. You should try to give your best to your students. Try to...as difficult as it is you should try to give your 100% to make them...., even if the students don't want to learn you should try your best to make them want to learn. I feel you should not be absent from school all the time and always have follow-ups with students. If an incident has occurred or if you have told them there will be such a punishment or such an action, there should be consistency in whatever you say. And always follow through with what you tell them or how you deal with them. Sometimes...here at the school sometimes you have difficulty not always being early. I feel you have to be early to work definitely, but sometimes if you have lateness, sometimes if you have lateness....even if it is after 7.30, but if you are there by 7.45 or by 8.00 to start the class I feel this is still good. Sometimes a teacher can come at 7.30, but not be giving as much But if you are there by 8.00 and ready to start your work, giving all you think you can-I think this can qualify as a committed teacher.

R: You are mentioning consistency, so you feel there is no consistency?

Lise: I feel sometimes there is no consistency. There is a lack of consistency even on my part sometimes, and even on the management's side also.

R: You think that this has an impact on teacher commitment and the way students behave?

Lise: Definitely, because once they see a loophole, they see er...er...that something has been said but there is nook one time I get punished for doing this, but another time nothing is done, they see a space there to take advantage of. So I think consistency is very important.

R: Now tell me a little bit about your current level of commitment to teaching?

Lise: Anyway, I was trying to rate myself, considering high, middle or low level of commitment I would say I'm middle.

R: Can you tell me why?

Lise: Hmmm.....maybe sometimes you feel....if students maybe were more interested....if students say were meeting me half-way, maybe...I know not everybody is intelligent we all have to work hard, but if they were doing their part to meet the teacher half-way, maybe I would be more committed, I would be rated higher. Sometimes you can go to class with all your resources, you planned for the lesson, but once you get to the classroom, the way students are behaving all of a sudden you feel your energy level go down. Then when you think you are going to that class again.....(negative facial expression).

R: Are you trying to tell me that you consider the way students behave to be the most influential factors for commitment right now?

Lise: I think so. Students' attitudes and students' behaviour are the most. You can increase the salary the way you want, but if you're coming in students not wanting to do what they're supposed to do...*(long pause)*

R: Are there other factors you think that are contributing towards your high or low commitment?

Lise: Other factors are the things like salary, because I consider teaching as one of the most noble profession, it's not like any other job. I always tell people...they say teachers have a lot of holidays, I always tell them...you know...in the morning they get up, they pack their lunches for their kids and give them their uniform, and they just send them to school. We have to welcome all these people from different families, different background, and different attitudes...we have to accept...take them in, get them settled, deal with their problems, try to make them learn something. This is not like any other job that people go through every day. I feel teaching is not getting the recognition it needs in Seychelles. I think that and I think teachers should be better paid. Even this salary increase they've given I think should be more. Other factors...things you have to work with every day, because I like to give students a lot of, for example things to label, diagrams to label and one thing I have difficulty with is getting glue all the time. One day I have glue, one day I don't. I try to get the parents to buy glue for them some say they can't some bring. I think, resources also are another factor. Sometimes also the Ministry of Education, I feel there is too much paper work, too many records to keep. Like the homework record, when you have given a homework I have to go and see who has completed, who has not, so many records, sometimes you ask yourself what's the purpose of it. I know a teacher who tells me she has a class register, she was

going through her things and she found the class register in her things, although the school should check the register, nobody noticed that the register was not there.

But as I said, these are the side factors, not the main.

R: How would you describe the changes in the level of commitment at different stages of the profession? I know you haven't been here for a long time, how do you see the changes in the level of commitment among teachers around you?

Lise: Anyway, from what I see around me, in my department, I feel that most of the teachers are committed to the profession. I don't feel like some of them are.....I don't get the feeling that they've given up or say 'Ah you know you are new maybe for you this is a new thing or whatever....I feel everybody is trying their best to find ways to toss and turn, and get students to learn. I don't feel there is much difference in commitment; it seems as if they have the same commitment, maybe in the middle I would say, but trying to reach higher commitment.

R: How long do you intend to stay in teaching? Or what would make you decide to stay in or leave teaching?

Lise: *Thoughtful facial expression-phew!!!!*

R: Have you thought about that?

Lise: Yes, I have. Anyway, when people ask me now I say five years, when my bond is over-(*giggle*).

R: Really? Tell me why you feel this way?

Lise: I think I need a less stressful work.

R: So you feel that teaching is very stressful as a profession?

Lise: I think it is. But then I won't say that I won't go into teaching again- after teaching at primary I see myself back, so I don't know...But for now, I look forward....I tell myself five years, then I think I'll go to something less stressful.

R: You mentioned something earlier about training, what if you are given the opportunity for further training; will it make you change your mind?

Lise: This might make me stay. I definitely want to move forward. One of the reasons I joined teaching is that I thought I would be able to move maybe a few steps forward. But if I don't see this coming, I won't....I won't stay ten years to wait for it, definitely not.

R: But when you talk to other teachers, what do you think influences them to stay in or leave the profession?

Lise: Honestly now my other friends I talk to, they're saying that they are waiting to give back the five years of bond and then they are leaving. It seems they are very stressed with the work.

R: What do you think is causing all the stress that they are referring to-is it students' behaviour, or record keeping among the things that you mentioned earlier, or are there other reasons?

Lise: I think it is principally students' attitude.

R: What is it about you that have made you survive so far? Do you think you are a survivor or a thriver?

Lise: I think I am a survivor, because I don't think that it is so difficult for me being a teacher-I can handle my students, I have some difficulties with some, students but not all and I don't let them...I always say that I won't let the students rule me, so I try to make sure that I am the one who is in charge, not them. Hmmmm...I think I have some personal strengths which make me able to do it. I'm confident when I'm in front of a class. I....I try my best to know my stuff....to know what I'm going to pass on to them. Maybe my confidence and also the strength I have make me feel...Because I have teacher friend who struggle to.... or who strive to...on a daily basis just to stay in as a teacher.

R: Tell me a little bit about the support you received as a new teacher.

Lise: Hmmmm....support....anyway, I feel that up to now I received the support that I needed. Anything which comes up I can go to my Head of Department., or even straight to management, and inform them about it. In most cases I've been satisfied with the outcome. In some cases I have been disappointed. But I never really felt alone since I've been here. I've had teachers who helped me, or colleagues I can go to for advice. I never felt alone.

R: Do you think that there should be some sort of structure to support Newly Qualified teachers in the school?

Lise: You mean outside structure or within the school?

R: Within the school.

Lise: (Long Pause). Anyway, for me as I've not felt....I've not felt alone, I've not felt without support, I don't really think there is a need. I don't know for others.

R: And how and to what extent do other people support you in your job?

Lise: I get support, like if I have extra work to do, if I have to bring work home, I don't do things like cooking or whatever. I get time to do my work. Sometimes some friends however, they ask me why I joined teaching. Some are always asking me what I'm doing here, why I

quit SBC to work as a teacher. Some are supportive, others they don't really understand why. But...I can say that most of the time support is there.

R: What would you imagine a well-supported work place to be like? And what would help to create a well-supported work-place?

Lise: Hmm...well I think I will come back again to the issue of being consistent, for example, I can send a student to management for having done this and that. If at the end of the day I feel that the action which has been taken against the child is fair or is adequate, I will feel supported, however, if I feel that the student has been let off the hook sort of, maybe I would feel that I didn't get the support that I needed. Hmm... A well-supported work place also....if let's say I've expressed certain difficulty with a class, if for example a higher authority can come in and maybe have a shout or have a talk with the whole class, when I'm there tell them what is expected of them and what action will be taken against them. If I will see this I will say it is a well-supported work place. Hmm... also if...if you have resources that you need all the time, again I come back to it, or if I ask for...if I need a certain type of resource and the school goes out and tries to get that material or whatever I need, and if I say I need it on such a day, and I get it, then I would say it is a well-supported work place.

R: How would you describe the status of teaching in Seychelles?

Lise: Anyway I feel, as I was saying earlier, it should be....we should get more recognition. Hmm...some people, I think they tend to look down on teaching. They think that it's....anyway that it's not so important. I think it should get more importance, more recognition, and be considered like jobs such as doctors, lawyers, and all that. I don't think it gets enough recognition in Seychelles.

R: What would you advise a person who wants to take up teaching as a career?

Lise: Anyway, I would encourage a person who wants to take up teaching as a career. I would not discourage a person, because....besides all the things, I think part of me...I like teaching.... I actually like teaching, despite the difficulties, despite me saying I probably be around for just five years, I like teaching and I would not discourage a person to join teaching. I will definitely encourage a person, but I would....I would tell the person about the difficulties that there are...I would never discourage a person.

R: What key messages do you think I should convey to policy makers, something that will influence commitment of teachers?

Lise: Ok, they can find a way to improve....help improve students' attitude and behaviour. Whoever thinks there has been this policy of not beating them and....some form of physical punishment, I think students have taken....have taken it to their advantage- as they say you

can't beat me, you can't touch me. I feel students have too much 'rights' sometimes and teachers have less. And then teachers feel that the Ministry they give more advantage or more support to students. Teachers sometimes get blamed for....tend to be questioned more than the students. Many teachers, and I'm one of them, think that the Ministry is on the side of the students. Maybe if teachers felt that yet we are.... Maybe not more important, but as important, or the Ministry should take our side as much as students' this would help teachers to be more committed or help teachers even to stay in the profession. Hmmmm.....maybe ...look at the salary also. Weigh the work of teachers-we are forming the people of tomorrow, the lawyers, the President, the doctors, they are going through the teachers-so maybe also look at the salary, the status-make them feel more....give them that status and nobility that they deserve. But I would definitely tell policy makers to find a way to be more accountable, more respectful of education and of teachers also.

R: Is there anything you would like to add that we have not mentioned regarding commitment of teachers? We haven't mentioned anything about community, about parental involvement/support- would you like to add anything about this, or anything else for that matter?

Lise: Anyway I think parents should be more....how should I say....more supportive towards the school, because nobody wants to keep their child on detention or whatever, or give them any other punishment for that matter. The reason that their child is kept on detention, I think is in the best interest of the child. I think teachers want the best for the students and parents should support teachers in that direction. But not blaspheming teachers, or to come to school to make trouble or whatever. They should be supportive.

R: Are these things happening?

Lise: Yes, for example here we have this policy of no negotiation about mobiles, once a mobile is confiscated or taken away from you, there is no negotiation-you will get it back at the end of the term, based on your behaviour. But sometimes the parents come in at the end of the day and they make trouble, they want the mobile back. They say they spent a lot of money on it etc... They should support the school, if the student was not supposed to be using the mobile or whatever, they should stay in line with the school is saying. I think that's about it.

R: You sure. Well thank you very much for your participation and for your time. I will send the transcription for you to read and approve.

Best wishes.